



PASCAL

THE LIVING THOUGHTS OF

# PASCAL

PRESENTED BY

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY



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BLAISE PASCAL was born at Clermont-Ferrand, France, on June 19, 1623, of an ancient family of civil servants. He went to no school, being taught by his father, and despite continuous ill-health showed marked precocity, especially in mathematics and science. He completed an important mathematical treatise before he was sixteen. Friends of his early years were Corneille and Descartes. At Rouen (whither they had moved in 1641) the Pascal family came under the influence of Jansenism, and in 1651 his sister Jacqueline retired for a time to the cloistered life of Port Royal. Pascal himself continued to live in a luxurious and wordly fashion until 1654, when a carriage accident at Neuilly contributed to his conversion. He renounced the world and henceforward spent much time with the community at Port Royal, though he did not become one of its solitaires. At a time when the Port Royal party was in doctrinal difficulties, he very quickly wrote the first of the *Provincial Letters*, which were printed in 1656. His final illness began in 1658, and he remained confined to his sister's house until his death on August 19, 1662. The *Pensées* first appeared, in a garbled version, eight years after his death. It was not until 1844 that an authoritative text was produced.

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## PASCAL

BY

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

A YOUNG MAN OF TWENTY-FOUR, WHO HAD ALREADY proved himself the equal of the greatest mathematical geniuses, renounced science to devote himself exclusively to God—to God as He was being revealed by the disciples of the Bishop of Ypres, Jansenius, and whose doctrine the Abbé de Saint Cyran was spreading in France. This was Blaise Pascal. At the age of twenty-four he discovered that the rigorous method which he had brought to science was being used by others, the Jansenists, in the search for true religion.

If religious truth has once been revealed to us, reason, following Jansenius's teaching, must then be applied; all we need to do is to know the truth well and to live it

Suffering physically, perhaps also humiliated by the starvation and deprivation of his adolescent senses, the young Pascal was—like all great and proud men—profoundly touched by the miserable state of mankind. The power which Jansenism exercised over certain minds stemmed from its clear, simple attitude toward corrupt nature. The wasting away of the flesh, disease, decrepitude, and final decay were, to the Jansenists, merely the image and reflection of the effect of concupiscence upon the lost soul. To perceive that once was to perceive it for all time.

Being tainted from birth we go inexorably toward evil,



and Pascal learned from Saint Cyran that this inevitable downfall was punished by eternal castigation. Here he plunged headlong into heresy; he professed that we are condemned forever for following an invincible inclination, as though, in the material world, it were a crime for a man's body to have weight.

Believing in predestination, Pascal, nevertheless, did not despair. One hope remained: perhaps we are loved by God. Some of us are loved; the important thing was to belong to that small number, to be preferred above others. God drew the hearts of His loved ones toward Him, and the joy of His grace was all powerful. But since the sin of Adam, that grace was no longer our due. It was accorded only to those few who were chosen from all eternity—that is, divine mercy given freely, but irresistibly, by which the chosen few were rewarded.

We would not believe that such heresy could have attracted a young man if we did not know that the more terrible the doctrine, the greater the efforts of the believer to find reassurance. Calvin and Jansenius found their theology consoling. "They rob the Father to give to the Son," is Joubert's famous saying about the Jansenists. They hid from the Father to take refuge with the Son; they seek help from the Son against the terrifying image which they themselves created of the infinite Being.

But it is not by reason that they arrive at this concept. In order for Pascal at the age of twenty-four to give himself to Jesus Christ, bringing with him all his dearest ones, it was necessary that he should already be aware of Jesus Christ. He had not yet reached that famous night, eight years later, which was to see him, weeping out of sheer joy, in an ecstasy of love. The taste for sham perspectives has given rise to the legend that he underwent a first conversion, wholly intellectual, which a worldly period

was to separate from the second conversion, wholly mystical. In point of fact, from 1646 on, Pascal probably experienced the equivalent of the night of the 23rd of November 1654. He himself hints as much; considerably later, speaking of that phase of his youth, he tells his sister Jacqueline that he must have had "horrible bonds" at that time to have resisted the grace which God offered him and the "emotions" with which He filled him. How could these "emotions" have manifested themselves except in tears of joy?

The era of these "horrible bonds" began in 1653, after glorious years, but years made wretched perhaps less by his own sickness than because of his beloved sister Jacqueline's entrance into the cloister at Port Royal. He did not openly deny any of the cloister's Christian principles, but during those years, in that silent atmosphere of God, in the complete abandonment of that way of life, the over-perfect nuns and those "gentlemen" of Port Royal for whom the values of the world had no exchange price, were almost more than he could bear.

Suffering and abandoned, Pascal turned to those from whom he received applause, admiration and friendship. The Jansenists refused to recognize the power of minds like his over inferior minds. But that which they scorned existed nevertheless.

M. Bourdelot, physician to Queen Christine of Sweden (to whom Pascal had dedicated his invention, the arithmetical machine, forerunner of all calculating machines), wrote to Blaise Pascal about this time: "You have the clearest, most penetrating mind I have ever seen. With your devotion to work, you will surpass both the ancients and the moderns. . . ."

During this period, Pascal was admired, and also loved with that tenderness which in a young heart often accompanies admiration. Abandoned by his sister Jacqueline,

Blaise found much pleasure in the enthusiastic friendship of the Duke de Roannez who, not content with being a fanatical admirer of Pascal's genius, became so personally attached to Pascal that he took him to the province of Poitou, which he governed. Blaise returned his affection, and when he was about to turn to God for the second time, it was the Duke who first prevented him from taking the final step. In order to retire from the world, Pascal had to obtain the Duke's consent, and this the Duke could not grant without tears.

As for Pascal's love-affairs, we know nothing of them. All that has been written about his relations with his friend's sister, Mademoiselle de Roannez, is absurd. If Pascal loved a woman, it would be precisely to her that he could not address such edifying letters as those written in the tone he uses toward Mademoiselle de Roannez. He would not have had the strength to use the tone of both devotee and theologian—what lover has ever had this courage?

We know nothing of Pascal in love, although he speaks of love like one who has suffered from it.

Is *The Discourse on the Passions of Love* entirely from his hand? The least one can say is that the tone of the *Pensées* runs through it. Perhaps Pascal was liked by some women—he was certainly admired by them. Above all, his conversation flattered them, uplifted them in their own eyes and in those of their admirers. But if he loved someone, she was, assuredly neither a *précieuse* nor a scholar. The person he would have loved must have had a body as healthy as his own was ill, a youth as triumphant as his own youth was defeated and wounded. He could have cherished only this proud power of flesh and blood which had been denied to him. Everything that has been written about women, all the subtleties of professional psychologists are, where Pascal is concerned, not worth the simple

and naked truth contained in seven words uttered by the painter Eugène Delacroix to explain his meagre success in society : "I am too pale and too thin."

In his *Discourse on the Passions of Love*, Pascal has unquestionably written just the contrary : "Women love to perceive a fastidiousness in men, and this is, it seems to me, the most vulnerable point whereby to win them." If he tried to make himself loved he succeeded only in making his spirit loved. "Love strengthens the spirit, and is nourished by the spirit. One needs spirit to love."

One would have to read the entire *Discourse* with real critical detachment in order to pass over the brilliant maxims, the after-dinner dissertations for the use of the ladies and retain only the unwilling confession, the phrase that is never contrived, the cry of joy or of pain from which the heart is still bleeding.

However, his body betrays him ; nothing demands more of health than does pleasure. The textbooks of literature and the encyclopædias give a carriage accident on the Pont de Neuilly as the reason for his conversion. But well before the day when the two horses took the bit in their teeth and leaped into the water, Pascal, surrounded by his strong, enthusiastic friends, must have experienced many times that deep weariness of a man who was different from other men and whose nature was inclined not toward diversion but toward concentration ; yet who made a determined effort to turn away from himself, even though his whole spirit urged him to turn inward in order to know himself better.

Even if he had had no attachment of the heart, this life against the current would suffice to reveal his taste for eternal things. But if, in this atmosphere of pleasure, he had exhausted himself in the determined conquest of an indifferent female, to what degree could his pain not have reached ? Later he was to write that the effects

of love are "fearful." Pleasures no longer amuse him; they did not prevent him from seeing himself, his wretchedness, and the death which was perhaps quite near

It was on the night of the 23rd of November 1654 that Blaise Pascal sealed his definitive pact with God. Without the parchment which he always carried sewed into the lining of his doublet, and which was found at his death, we would know nothing of that joy, or of those tears of joy. This "memorial" is lost, but we have a copy from his hand.

From the time he renounced the world up to that unforgettable night, Pascal had turned with all his strength toward God, but it was with the illusion that only his reason had urged him to do so. Cut off from human relations, he could do nothing except wait for divine grace, filled with immense hope, because he had learned from his Jansenist teachers that God ultimately succeeds in drawing the heart of whomever He loves towards Him. Pascal had given up mundane pleasures—he hated them. This hate is the certain sign that he is loved by God; by that God whom he describes in his "memorial" as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, *not of the philosophers and scholars.*"

The philosophers and the scholars felt the need for God, until Descartes began using Him only as a final, delicate gesture to set his universe into motion. After that, they learned to do without God who had become nothing but a word—a word: that is, to think of God now meant, for the most part, to think of nothing. How did Pascal find God by himself? This geometrician knew that "that which passes geometry surpasses us." And he knew that even in science no truth is held directly: "Man naturally recognizes only untruth and he must accept as truths only those principles whose opposite appears false to him."

How could Pascal reach God if God did not reach him? He could do nothing except wait and desire. Even this desire did not belong to him—it was the free gift of divine grace, the sign that heralded a miraculous election. And suddenly, on that night, God appeared. There was God—in person, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of loving-kindness and consolation.

“*Certitude*,” Pascal writes in his “memorial,” “*certitude, feeling, joy, peace, God of Jesus Christ.*” The unattainable is attained, and more than attained—possessed, loved, adored—by Jesus, in Jesus.

Everything outside of this is non-existent—glory, the world. Jesus enters into a tainted creature. With what trembling of admiration does Pascal give us these simple words in the middle of the famous parchment: “*Grandeur of the human soul.*” And a little further on: “*Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.*”

This man kneeling on the tiled floor of his chamber, weeping, has not reached this state by a tenacious effort of the will. There is nothing which the Christian soul disposes of less liberally than these outward signs.

Perhaps a saint would not have attached such great importance to that joy, to those tears of joy; he would have mistrusted them, for a saint does not seek joy, not even such joy, although he accepts it with humility when it is granted. The Jansenists reproach other Christians for giving too much to the free man and for reducing by that much the power of God. But in the last analysis it is Jansenism which demands signs and summons the Creator to console and reassure His creatures.

As one of those who receive salvation with fear and trembling, Pascal had need of joy to keep from losing heart. A time might come perhaps when he would no longer feel anything, when perhaps he could doubt the reality of that fire which, once consumed, leaves the heart

cold and black. If then he could only touch the paper that he had sewed in his clothes—the tangible sign which proved there had been no illusion, that he had been visited, possessed soul and body, by living joy !

One should not separate the “ memorial ” found in the lining of the doublet from the meditation known as “ The Mystery of Jesus ” and published at the end of the *Pensées*—the meditation to which he undoubtedly devoted himself on that famous night. It was perhaps during that night that he heard the sublime words which he gives to Christ : “ *Console thyself, thou wouldst not seek Me if thou hadst not found Me I thought of thee in Mine agony ; I have sweated such drops of blood for thee. . . Dost thou wish that it always cost Me the blood of My humanity, without thy shedding tears ?* ”

These words are addressed to a sinner, who rises with difficulty, to a beginner who still stumbles, and it is this that gives them their unique ring. We know what Jesus says to His saints. But here is the way He speaks to the prodigal, to the sheep, lost and recovered. The present collection contains this dialogue between Pascal and Jesus : “ *If thou knewest thy sins, thou wouldst lose heart.* ”—“ *I shall lose it then, Lord, for on Thy assurance I believe their malice. . . , Lord, I give thee all.* ”—“ *I love thee more ardently than thou hast loved thine abominations.* ”

By this word, abomination, shall we judge Pascal ? Or should we accept what his elder sister, Gilberte Perier, wrote : “ But by the mercy of God he was always free from vice ” ? If he did indulge in vice, Gilberte learned nothing of it, nor did the rest of his family, except perhaps the younger sister, Jacqueline, who wrote to her penitent brother : “ I am not astonished that God has shown you this grace, for it seems to me that, in many ways, you might still have been drawn towards the smell of

the quagmire which you had embraced so eagerly." If purity had been natural to Pascal, he would not have experienced recovery with such power of feeling "Without Jesus Christ," he wrote, "man must be in vice and misery."

But even a Christian, however fervent, can conceive of an honest life in the world. Nevertheless, Pascal still insisted, as a cured leper might, that "Apart from Him, there is but vice, misery, error, darkness, death, despair."

After the enlightenment of that famous night, Pascal might be precipitated into the Jansenists' battle against the Jesuits, and give himself up to the fury of the *Provincial Letters*, but he was never again to lose the peace that Christ gives to His loved ones. He might continue to astonish the world with his discoveries and by his works on Roulette, he might write treatises on solids of revolution, resolve the problems of integral calculus and open the way for the creators of infinitesimal calculus. But he was always to remain anchored in God.

Let us try, then, to picture Blaise Pascal during the last years of his life. He carried the love of purity so far that even his pious sister was astonished—he would not allow a woman's beauty to be praised in his presence. Pascal's hatred for anything that might separate him from Jesus Christ—particularly his hatred for the gratification of the senses—is common to all saints, as is also the love of sickness and poverty. But with Pascal there is an added Jansenist terror of losing the grace he possesses. He feels himself more secure in illness and blesses infirmity for putting him beyond all covetousness.

The poor occupy him more each day. Jesus identifies Himself with them; to serve them is to serve Him. While admiring the founders of hospitals, and those whom nowadays one calls public benefactors, he liked, as his sister



Gilberte tells us, to "serve the poor in poverty." In other words, he liked to have a poor man near him, living beside him. And inasmuch as he wanted to feel that "such drops of blood had been sweated for him," he likewise wanted that poor man in particular to be his witness before the Saviour on the day when the word would be proclaimed: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat."

He developed a secret distrust of the purest affections, and tried in vain to convince Gilberte that she should no longer permit the caresses of her children. This is typical of that Jansenist mistrust of anything which might jeopardize—even from afar—the happiness of belonging to those chosen few who will never perish.

Not that he rejoiced egoistically in this happiness, since his last energies were used in writing the *Apologie*, of which the *Pensées* remain, and with which he wished to convert sinners. What is difficult to understand in this Jansenist is his hope of changing, by means of a single book, God's eternal pattern of the elect and the damned! Did he believe that the *Apologie* would change their respective numbers by even one unit? Undoubtedly he believed that "Faith embraces many truths that seem to contradict themselves. . . ." But it is strange that he could continue to believe in the God of Jansenius, who had damned a large part of the human race in advance, and that, at the same time, he could live united with the God of gentleness and consolation, the God of Jesus Christ, whose peace he describes in a sublime fragment which appears in this collection, the one beginning: "I love poverty because He loved it. . . ."

Up to the end, Pascal struggled against his own heart. He had reflected on love as on everything else, according to his method, and he had arrived at clear principles to which he held fast. He execrated sentimentalism and

esteemed only rational tenderness which consists, he said, "in participating in all that happens to our friends, in every way that reason tells us to, at the cost of our property, of our comfort, of our liberty, and even of our life should the object merit it." But the Jansenist in him still appeared in his demand that he should not be loved, in which he was futilely at odds with his own nature. He made a point of being harsh to poor Gilberte to turn her away from her attachment to him. He could not permit himself to be loved with personal attachment, undoubtedly because he naturally felt himself to be only too much inclined in that way. Saints do not know this terror. Pascal must have felt it greatly, and he must have had a strange mistrust of his own heart to have written on a paper which he always carried with him—in this case, not in his coat, as he had done with the "memorial," but within reach of his hand—and the state of which proves he often re-read: "It is unjust that men should attach themselves to me, even though they do it with pleasure and voluntarily. I should deceive those in whom I had created this desire; for I am not the end of any, and I have not the wherewithal to satisfy them. Am I not about to die? And thus the object of their attachment will die. Therefore, as I would be blameable in causing a falsehood to be believed, though I should employ gentle persuasion, and though it should give me pleasure; even so I am blameable in making myself loved. And if I attract persons to attach themselves to me . . . for they ought to spend their life and their care in pleasing God, or in seeking Him."

We have here the strongest proof that Pascal loved and that he was loved. This paper, always at hand, taken up at every temptation, re-read, meditated upon, this written promise that he had to be able to touch, to clasp in his hand whenever he went out of his way to be harsh, to

be distant, to rebuff a cherished creature—what irrefutable testimony !

Although he was aware of his power over other minds, Blaise Pascal died without foreseeing that his most casual notes would be collected. Pascal's saintliness required that he should die without knowing this, that he should resign himself to this apparent defeat. Even his friends believed that none of his work would remain : " He will be little known to posterity," wrote the Jansenist Nicole. " What will remain of this great mind but two or three little works, of which there is already so much that is useless ? "

Nicole, who was later to reproach the young Sévigné for admiring the *Pensées* too much, and who was to call Pascal a " collector of shells," had not understood that the genius of this man passed the barriers of his sect, that this river could not be contained within the narrow limits of Jansenism. The river was to flow, underground, across the century of Voltaire and Condorcet, and to reappear with greater power than ever in our own time.

After three centuries, Blaise Pascal is still involved in our quarrels ; he is alive. His slightest thought troubles, or charms, or irritates, but he is understood instantly, before he has half begun. He is so obviously present that some people reply to him impatiently, ridiculing his eccentricities. Paul Valéry, for instance, calls him " the man who wastes his time sewing papers in his pockets."

This Jansenist is a son of Montaigne. Montaigne was his real teacher, not Jansenius, who taught him nothing about the human heart. Of course Pascal wrote : " It is not in Montaigne that I find everything that I see there, but in myself." But Montaigne served him as a guiding-mark. The valleys and heights of that identical nature and heart which Montaigne observed, were tragically

illuminated by Pascal. His lightning rends the heavens and bathes with light the human landscape where the author of the *Essays* fearlessly walked.

An inconsistent Jansenist, Pascal does not resign himself to the chosen few. He knows that Montaigne is not Montaigne alone, but also a countless family of minds who feel that one can come to an understanding with Nature—knowing it, they believe, in all its complexities, one can accept it as it is. Far from taking Nature tragically, they install themselves in her midst and draw to themselves all the elements necessary to achieve a modest daily happiness. If they become contaminated, if they degrade themselves until their death, they accept that without flinching. Pascal was given the mission of disturbing them—he released a tempest of infinite love over the men of Montaigne.

If the sons of Montaigne deny that they are aware of this tempest, Pascal makes the effort to show them, even in their own nature, the traces of this love, the evidences of refusal, of reprobation, of redemption—just as the geologist deciphers the earth, and, by means of methodical excavations, reconstructs prehistoric life.

Pascal is in accord with Montaigne and with posterity in his desire to know man; he shares their passion for this study of the human heart to such an extent that he is more at home with his worldly friends, such as the Chevalier de Méré, or Miron, than with the austere Jansenists, MM. de Rebours and de Sacy. The more Pascal devotes himself to that knowledge of man, the greater becomes his admiration for the "*honnête homme*." This was the term he used to designate the man without pride, who cannot be called either a mathematician or a preacher, and in whom the world observes no outstanding quality except when there is need to make use of it. The Chevalier de Méré was undoubtedly referring to Pascal

when he said · "I have a friend who would travel to India only to see an *honnête homme*."

When he writes his *Apologie*, it is this love for the "*honnête homme*" that incites Pascal to establish himself in the very heart of the natural man. And while the implacable Jansenist, M. de Sacy, sees in Montaigne the "object of demons and the pasture of worms," Pascal, on the other hand, utilizes the work of Montaigne (though apparently it had no such purpose) to convince unbelievers ; it is Pascal who throws Montaigne into the current of redemption.

There lies one of the secrets of his power : he has no contempt for his adversary. Pascal declares that he will devote his energies toward the knowledge of himself. Even though "that will not serve to find the truth," it will "serve at least to order his life" Thus he accepts Montaigne's weapons.

Even after his conversion he cannot deny himself a grand indulgence toward the author of the *Essays*. "One can excuse," he notes, "his feelings—which are a bit free and sensual in certain encounters with life." Pascal's adversary is aware that he is faced by someone who does not misunderstand him, who goes so far as to recognize that the evil from which he recoils sometimes demands "an extraordinary grandeur of the soul." Pascal denies nothing that concerns man ; he traverses all that is man in order to reach God.

It is admirable that this prodigious genius, century after century, could have been able to mingle with the crowd of restless beings, that he could have kept himself at their level, and, without ever lowering himself, could have put himself in the place of every one of us.

Every thinking man, even the free-thinker, joins Pascal as he joins Montaigne. Because of his passionate desire to know the singularities and the contradictions in the

real man, the least of his *Pensées* touches a sensitive spot in us, and inevitably awakens a response. Pascal remains our equal in the most profound sense of the word, accepted as such by the most personal and individual part of ourselves. With real justification he can compare men to organs, the keys of which he knows and plays upon.

"Pascal possesses to the highest degree of intensity the feeling of the human person" This single phrase of Sainte-Beuve's defines the secret of his power. Geometrician that Pascal was, he ridiculed matter! Our mechanical civilization would perhaps have made this mechanician—who has stated that all the human bodies in the world are not worth man's slightest thought, and that all science and all philosophy are not worth the slightest sign of love—shrug his shoulders.

Pascal's Jansenist theology does not separate him from orthodox Christians. If Jansenius had condemned him to despair as he did so many other poor souls, Pascal would not have won posterity. But despair is a form of solitude from which he was saved. Taking a sharply turning path, he hoisted himself to the least solitary rock in the world—and there he has mingled with the crowd which has gathered about the Cross, waiting for all to be consummated.

It was not his prodigious mind through which he dominated inferior minds, that enabled him, above all else, to become a saint; it was not even his knowledge of man, that inexhaustible subject which the author of the *Pensées* explored to such lengths. Pascal's guiding force is his heart, the heart which he possesses in common with God's most humble creatures. Like them, he has clung with his two arms to the bloody Tree, and has not lifted his eyes much higher than the pierced feet of his Saviour.

A sinner, a convert is never alone. The great Pascal is the brother of all sinners, of all converts, of all wounded men whose wounds may reopen at any instant, of all whom Christ has pursued from afar, and who trust only in His love.

François Mauriac has selected the essence of  
Pascal's thought from

FRAGMENT OF A TREATISE ON VACUUM  
PRAYER, TO ASK OF GOD THE PROPER USE  
OF SICKNESS  
THE ART OF PERSUASION (of the Geometrical  
Spirit)  
LETTERS TO MADEMOISELLE DE ROANNEZ  
THOUGHTS (" Pensées ")  
" PROVINCIAL LETTERS "  
LETTER (written 17th October 1651 to M and Mme  
Perier, after the death of Pascal's father)



THE WORKS OF

BLAISE PASCAL

(1623-1662)

New Experiments on the Vacuum (1647 ?)

Prayer, to Ask of God the Proper Use of Sickness  
(1647)

Discourse on The Passions of Love (1654 ?)

Letters written by Louis de Montalte to one of his  
Provincial Friends and to the Reverend Jesuit Fathers  
on the Morality and Politics of These Fathers  
(*Provincial Letters*) (1656)

The Art of Persuasion (of the Geometrical Spirit)  
(1658)

Notes for an "Apology for the Christian Religion"  
(*Pensées*) (Published in 1669)

## FRAGMENT OF A TREATISE ON VACUUM

### CONCERNING AUTHORITY IN THE MATTER OF PHILOSOPHY

THE RESPECT THAT WE BEAR TO ANTIQUITY IS AT THE present day carried to such a point on subjects in which it ought to have less weight, that oracles are made of all its thoughts and mysteries, even of its obscurities ; that novelties can no longer be advanced without peril, and that the text of an author<sup>1</sup> suffices to destroy the strongest reasons. . . .

Not that it is my intention to correct one error by another, and not to esteem the ancients at all because others have esteemed them too much.

I do not pretend to banish their authority in order to exalt reasoning alone, although others have sought to establish their authority alone to the prejudice of reasoning. . . .

In matters in which we only seek to know what the authors have written, as in history, geography, jurisprudence, languages . . . and especially in theology ; and in fine in all those which have for their principle either simple facts or divine or human institutions, we must necessarily have recourse to their books, since all that we can know of them is therein contained ; hence it is evident that we can have full knowledge of them, and that it is not possible to add anything thereto.

If it is in question to know who was the first king

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle.

of the French ; in what spot geographers place the first meridian ; what words are used in a dead language, and all things of this nature ; what other means than books can guide us to them ? And who can add anything new to what they teach us, since we wish only to know what they contain ?

Authority alone can enlighten us on these. But the subject in which authority has the principal weight is theology, because there she is inseparable from truth, and we know it only through her : so that to give full certainty to matters incomprehensible to reason, it suffices to show them in the sacred books ; as to show the uncertainty of the most probable things, it is only necessary to show that they are not included therein, since its principles are superior to Nature and reason, and since, the mind of man being too weak to attain them by its own efforts, he cannot reach these lofty conceptions if he be not carried thither by an omnipotent and superhuman power.

It is not the same with subjects that fall under the senses and under reasoning, authority here is useless ; it belongs to reason alone to know them. They have their separate rights : there the one has all the advantage, here the other reigns in turn. But as subjects of this kind are proportioned to the grasp of the mind, it finds full liberty to extend them ; its inexhaustible fertility produces continually, and its inventions may be multiplied altogether without limit and without interruption. . . .

It is thus that geometry, arithmetic, music, physics, medicine, architecture and all the sciences that are subject to experiment and reasoning, should be augmented in order to become perfect. The ancients found them merely outlined by those who preceded them ; and we shall leave them to those who will come after us in a more finished state than we received them.

As their perfection depends on time and pains, it is evident that although our pains and time may have acquired less than their labours separate from ours, both joined together must nevertheless have more effect than each one alone.

The clearing up of this difference should make us pity the blindness of those who bring authority alone as proof in physical matters, instead of reasoning or experiments ; and inspire us with horror for the wickedness of others who make use of reasoning alone in theology, instead of the authority of the Scripture and the Fathers. We must raise the courage of those timid people who dare invent nothing in physics, and confound the insolence of those rash persons who produce novelties in theology. Nevertheless the misfortune of the age is such, that we see many new opinions in theology, unknown to all antiquity, maintained with obstinacy and received with applause ; whilst those that are produced in physics, though small in number, should, it seems, be convicted of falsehood as soon as they shock already received opinions in the slightest degree ; as if the respect that we have for the ancient philosophers were a duty, and that which we bear to the most ancient of the Fathers solely a matter of courtesy ! I leave it to judicious persons to remark the importance of this abuse which perverts the order of the sciences with so much injustice. . . .

Let us divide our credulity and suspicion with more justice, and limit this respect we have for the ancients. As reason gives it birth, she ought also to measure it ; and let us consider that if they had continued in this restraint of not daring to add anything to the knowledge which they had received, or if those of their times had made the like difficulty of receiving the novelties which they offered them, they would have deprived themselves and their posterity of the fruit of their inventions.

As they only made use of that which had been bequeathed to them as a means whereby to gain more, and as this happy daring opened to them the way to great things, we should take that which they acquired in the same manner, and by their example, make of it the means and not the end of our study, and thus strive while imitating to surpass them.

For what is more unjust than to treat our ancestors with more deference than they showed to those who preceded them, and to have for them that inviolable respect which they have only merited from us because they had not the like for those who possessed the same advantage over them ? . . .

The secrets of Nature are concealed ; although she is continually working, we do not always discover her effects ; time reveals them from age to age, and although always alike in herself she is not always alike known.

The experiments that give us the knowledge of these secrets are multiplied continually ; and as they are the sole principles of physics, the consequences are multiplied in proportion.

It is in this manner that we may at the present day adopt different sentiments and new opinions, without despising *the ancients* and without ingratitude, since the first knowledge which they have given us has served as a stepping-stone to our own, and since in these advantages we are indebted to them for our ascendancy over them ; because being raised by their aid to a certain degree, the slightest effort causes us to mount still higher, and with less pains and less glory we find ourselves above them. Thence it is that we are enabled to discover things which it was impossible for them to perceive. Our view is more extended, and although they knew as well as we all that they could observe in Nature, they did not, nevertheless, know it so well, and we see more than they.

Yet it is marvellous in what manner their sentiments are revered. It is made a crime to contradict them and an act of treason to add to them, as though they had left no more truths to be known.

Is not this to treat unworthily the reason of man and to put it on a level with the instinct of animals, since we take away the principal difference between them, which is that the effects of reason accumulate without ceasing, whilst instinct remains always in the same state? The cells of the bees were as correctly measured a thousand years ago as to-day, and each formed a hexagon as exactly the first time as the last. It is the same with all that the animals produce by this occult impulse. Nature instructs them in proportion as necessity impels them; but this fragile science is lost with the wants which give it birth: as they received it without study, they have not the happiness of preserving it; and every time it is given them it is new to them, since Nature having for her object nothing but the maintenance of animals in a limited order of perfection, she inspires them with this necessary science always the same, lest they may fall into decay, and does not permit them to add to it, lest they should exceed the limits that she has prescribed to them. It is not the same with man, who is formed only for infinity. He is ignorant at the earliest age of his life; but he is instructed unceasingly in his progress; for he derives advantage, not only from his own experience, but also from that of his predecessors; since he always retains in his memory the knowledge which he himself has once acquired, and since he has that of the ancients ever present in the books which they have bequeathed to him. And as he preserves this knowledge, he can also add to it easily; so that men are at the present day in some sort in the same condition in which those ancient philosophers would have been found, could they have survived till the present time,

adding to the knowledge which they possessed that which their studies would have acquired by the aid of so many centuries. Thence it is that by an especial prerogative, not only does each man advance from day to day in the sciences, but all mankind together make continual progress in proportion as the world grows older, since the same thing happens in the succession of men as in the different ages of single individuals. So that the whole succession of men, during the course of many ages, should be considered as a single man who subsists forever and learns continually, whence we see with what injustice we respect antiquity in philosophers ; for as old age is that period of life most remote from infancy, who does not see that old age in this universal man ought not to be sought in the times nearest his birth, but in those the most remote from it ? Those whom we call ancient were really new in all things, and properly constituted the infancy of mankind ; and as we have joined to their knowledge the experience of the centuries which have followed them, it is in ourselves that we should find this antiquity that we revere in others.

They should be admired for the results which they derived from the very few principles they possessed, and they should be excused for those in which they failed rather from the lack of the advantage of experience than the strength of reasoning. . . .

Thus it is that, in respect to vacuum, they had a right to say that Nature would not suffer it, since all their experiments had always made them remark that she abhorred and could not suffer it. But if the modern experiments had been known to them, perhaps they would have found cause for affirming what they found cause for denying, for the reason that vacuum had not yet appeared. Thus, in the judgment they formed that Nature would not suffer vacuum, they only heard

Nature spoken of in the condition in which they knew her. . .

Thus it is that, without contradicting them, we can affirm the contrary of what they say ; and, whatever authority, in fine, this antiquity may have, truth should always have more, although newly discovered, since she is always older than all the opinions that we have had of her, and it would be showing ourselves ignorant of her nature to imagine that she may have begun to be at the time when she began to be known.



## PRAYER

### TO ASK OF GOD THE PROPER USE OF SICKNESS

I. Lord, whose spirit is so good and so gentle in all things, and who art so merciful that not only the prosperity but the very disgrace that happens to thy elect is the effect of thy mercy, grant me the favour not to act towards me as towards a heathen in the condition to which thy justice has reduced me : that like a true Christian I may recognize thee for my Father and my God, in whatever condition I may find myself, since the change of my condition brings none to thine ; as thou art always the same, however subject I may be to change, and as thou art none the less God when thou afflictest and punishest, than when thou comfortest and showest indulgence.

II. Thou gavest me health to serve thee, and I made a profane use of it. Thou sendest me sickness now to correct me ; suffer not that I use it to irritate thee by my impatience. I made a bad use of my health, and thou hast justly punished me for it. Suffer not that I make a bad use of my punishment. And since the corruption of my nature is such that it renders thy favours pernicious to me, grant, O my God ! that thy all-powerful grace may render thy chastisements salutary. If my heart was full of affection for the world while it retained its vigour, destroy this vigour for my salvation ; and render me incapable of enjoying the world, either through weakness of body

or through zeal of charity, that I may enjoy but thee alone.

III. O God, before whom I must render an exact account of all my actions at the end of my life and at the end of the world ! O God, who lettest the world and all the things of the world subsist but to train thy elect or to punish sinners ! O God, who allowest sinners hardened in the pleasurable and criminal use of the world ! O God, who makest our bodies to die, and who at the hour of death separateth our soul from all that it loved in the world ! O God, who wilt snatch me, at this last moment of my life, from all the things to which I am attached and on which I have set my heart ! O God, who wilt consume at the last day the heavens and the earth with all the creatures they contain, to show to all mankind that nothing subsists save thee, and that thus nothing is worthy of love save thee, since nothing is durable save thee ! O God, who wilt destroy all these vain idols and all these fatal objects of our passions ! I praise thee, my God, and I will bless thee all the days of my life, that it has pleased thee to anticipate in my favour this terrible day, by destroying all things in respect to me through the weakness to which thou hast reduced me. I praise thee, my God, and I will bless thee all the days of my life, that it has pleased thee to reduce me to the incapacity of enjoying the sweets of health and the pleasures of the world, and that thou hast destroyed in some sort, for my advantage, the deceitful idols that thou wilt destroy effectively, for the confusion of the wicked, in the day of thy wrath. Grant, Lord, that I may judge myself, after the destruction that thou hast made with respect to me, that thou mayest not judge me thyself, after the entire destruction that thou wilt make of my life and of the world. For, Lord, as at the instant of my death I shall find myself separated from the world, stripped of all things, alone in thy presence,

to answer to thy justice for all the emotions of my heart, grant that I may consider myself in this sickness as in a species of death, separated from the world, stripped of all the objects of my attachment, alone in thy presence, to implore of thy mercy the conversion of my heart ; and that thus I may have extreme consolation in knowing that thou sendest me now a partial death in order to exercise thy mercy, before thou sendest me death effectively in order to exercise thy judgment. Grant then, O my God, that as thou hast anticipated my death, I may anticipate the rigour of thy sentence, and that I may examine myself before thy judgment, so that I may find mercy in thy presence.

IV. Grant, O my God ! that I may adore in silence the order of thy adorable providence in the direction of my life ; that this scourge may console me ; and that, having lived during peace in the bitterness of my sins, I may taste the heavenly sweets of thy grace during the salutary evils with which thou afflictest me. But I perceive, my God, that my heart is so obdurate and full of the thoughts, the cares, the anxieties and the attachments of the world, that sickness no more than health, nor discourses, nor books, nor thy sacred Scriptures, nor thy Gospel, nor thy most holy mysteries, nor alms, nor fasts, nor mortifications, nor miracles, nor the use of sacraments, nor the sacrifice of thy body, nor all my efforts, nor those of all the world together, can do anything at all for the commencement of my conversion, if thou dost not accompany all these things with an extraordinary assistance of thy grace. It is for this that I address myself to thee, all-powerful God, to ask of thee a gift which all created things together cannot accord to me. I should not have the boldness to address to thee my cries, if any other had power to grant them. But, my God, as the conversion of my heart, which I ask of thee, is a work

which surpasses all the efforts of Nature, I can only address myself to the all-powerful Author and Master of Nature and of my heart. To whom shall I cry, O Lord, to whom shall I have recourse, if not to thee? Nothing that is less than God can fulfil my expectation. It is God himself that I ask and seek; and it is to thee alone, my God, that I address myself to obtain thee. Open my heart, O Lord, enter into the rebellious place which has been occupied by vices. They hold it subject. Enter into it as into the strong man's house; but first bind the strong and powerful enemy that has possession of it, and then take the treasures which are there. Lord, take my affections, which the world had stolen; take this treasure thyself, or rather retake it, since it belongs to thee as a tribute that I owe thee, since thy image is imprinted in it. Thou formedst it, O Lord, at the moment of my baptism, which was my second birth; but it is wholly effaced. The image of the world is so deeply engraven there that thine is no longer to be recognized. Thou alone couldst create my soul, thou alone canst create it anew; thou alone couldst form thy image, thou alone canst reform and re-imprint thy effaced portrait, that is, my Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is thy image, and the expression of thy substance.

V. O my God! how happy is a heart that can love so charming an object, that does not dishonour it, and the attachment of which is so salutary to it! I feel that I cannot love the world without displeasing thee, and destroying and dishonouring myself; yet the world is still the object of my delight. O my God! how happy is the soul of which thou art the delight, since it can abandon itself to loving thee, not only without scruple, but also with merit! How firm and durable is its happiness, since its expectation will never be frustrated, because thou wilt never be destroyed, and neither life nor death will ever separate it from the object of its desires; and since the

same moment that will plunge the wicked with their idols into a common ruin, will unite the just with thee in a common glory ; and since, as the former will perish with the perishable objects to which they are attached, the latter will subsist eternally in the eternal and self-subsistent object to which they are closely bound ! Oh ! how happy are those who with an entire liberty, and irresistible inclination of their will, love perfectly and freely that which they are obliged to love necessarily !

VI. Perfect, O my God, the good impulses that thou givest me Be their end as thou art their principle. Crown thy own gifts, for I recognize that they are from thee. Yes, my God, and far from pretending that my prayers may have some merit that forces thee to accord them of necessity, I humbly acknowledge that, having given to created things my heart, which thou hadst formed only for thyself, and not for the world, nor for myself, I can expect no grace except from thy mercy, since I have nothing in me that can oblige thee to it, and since all the natural impulses of my heart, whether tending towards created things, or towards myself, can only irritate thee I, therefore, render thee thanks, my God, for the good impulses which thou givest me, and for the very one that thou hast given me to render thanks for them.

VII. Move my heart to repent of my faults, since, without this internal sorrow, the external ills with which thou affectest my body will be to me a new occasion of sin. Make me truly to know that the ills of the body are nothing else than the punishment and the symbol combined of the ills of the soul. But, Lord, grant also that they may be their remedy, by making me consider, in the pains which I feel, those that I did not feel in my soul, although wholly diseased, and covered with sores. For, Lord, the greatest of its diseases is this insensibility and extreme weakness, which had taken away from it all feeling of

its own sufferings. Make me to feel them acutely, and grant that the portion of life that remains to me may be a continual penitence to wash away the offences that I have committed.

VIII. Lord, although my past life may have been exempt from great crimes, of which thou hast removed from me the occasions, it has nevertheless been most odious to thee by its continual negligence, by the bad use of thy most august sacraments, by the contempt of thy word and of thy inspirations, by the indolence and total uselessness of my actions and my thoughts, by the complete loss of the time which thou hadst given me only to adore thee, to seek in all my occupations the means of pleasing thee, and to repent of faults that are committed every day, and are even common to the most just ; so that their life should be a continual penitence, without which they are in danger of falling from their justice. Thus, my God, I have always been opposed to thee.

IX. Yes, Lord, hitherto I have always been deaf to thy inspirations, I have despised thy oracles ; I have judged the contrary of that which thou hast judged ; I have contradicted the holy maxims which thou hast brought to the world from the bosom of thy eternal Father, and conformably to which thou wilt judge the world. Thou sayest : Blessed are those that mourn, and woe to those that are comforted ! And I have said : Woe to those that mourn and blessed are those that are comforted ! I have said : Blessed are those that enjoy an affluent fortune, a glorious reputation and robust health ! And why have I reputed them blessed, if not because all these advantages furnished them ample facility for enjoying created things, that is for offending thee ! Yes, Lord, I confess that I have esteemed health a blessing, not because it is an easy means for serving thee with utility, for accomplishing more cares and vigils in thy service, and for the assistance

of my neighbour ; but because by its aid I could abandon myself with less restraint to the abundance of the delights of life, and better relish fatal pleasures. Grant me the favour, Lord, to reform my corrupt reason and to conform my sentiments to thine. Let me esteem myself happy in affliction, and, in the impotence of acting externally, purify my sentiments so that they may no longer be repugnant to thine ; and let me thus find thee within myself, since I cannot seek thee without because of my weakness. For, Lord, thy kingdom is within thy faithful ; and I shall find it within myself, if I find there thy spirit and thy sentiments.

X. But, Lord, what shall I do to force thee to diffuse thy spirit over this miserable earth ? All that I am is odious to thee, and I find nothing in myself that can be pleasing to thee. I see nothing therein, Lord, but my sufferings, which bear some resemblance to thine. Consider then the ills that I suffer and those that menace me. Look with an eye of mercy upon the wounds that thy hand has made, O my Saviour, who lovedst thy sufferings in death ! O God, who wert made man only to suffer more than any other man for the salvation of mankind ! O God, who wert not incarnated until after the sin of mankind, and who only tookest upon thyself a body in order to suffer therein all the ills which our sins had merited ! O God, who lovedst so much these suffering bodies that thou hast chosen for thyself a body more oppressed with suffering than any that has ever appeared on earth ! Look with favour upon my body, not for itself, nor for all that it contains, for everything therein deserving of thy anger, but for the ills that it endures, which alone can be worthy of thy love. Love my sufferings, Lord, and let my ills invite thee to visit me. But to finish the preparation for thy abode, grant, O my Saviour, that if my body has this in common with thine—that it

suffers for my offences, my soul may also have this in common with thine—that it may be plunged in sorrow for the same offences ; and that thus I may suffer with thee, and like thee, both in my body and in my soul, for the sins that I have committed.

XI. Grant me the favour, Lord, to join thy consolations to my sufferings, that I may suffer like a Christian. I ask not to be exempt from sorrow, for this is the recompense of the saints ; but I ask that I may not be abandoned to the sorrows of Nature without the consolations of thy spirit ; for this is the curse of the Jews and the heathen. I ask not to have a fullness of consolation without any suffering ; for this is the life of glory. Neither do I ask to be in the fullness of evils without consolation ; for this is the state of Judaism. But I ask, Lord, to feel at the same time both the sorrows of Nature for my sins, and the consolations of thy spirit through thy grace ; for this is the true condition of Christianity. Let me not feel sorrow without consolation ; but let me feel sorrow and consolation together, that I may come at last to feel thy consolation without any sorrow. For, Lord, thou lettest the world languish in natural suffering without consolation, before the coming of thy only Son : now thou consolest and assuagest the sufferings of thy faithful through the grace of thy only Son : and thou crownest thy saints with a pure beatitude in the glory of thy only Son. Such are the admirable degrees through which thou conductest thy work. Thou hast drawn me from the first : make me pass through the second, to arrive at the third. Lord, this is the favour that I ask of thee.

XII. Suffer me not to be so far removed from thee, that I can consider thy soul sorrowful unto death, and thy body a prey to death for my own sins, without rejoicing to suffer both in my body and in my soul. For what is there more shameful, and yet more common in Christians



and in myself, than that, whilst thou sweatest blood for the expiation of our offences, we live in delights ; and that those Christians who profess to belong to thee, that those who by baptism have renounced the world to follow thee, that those who have sworn solemnly in the presence of the Church to live and die for thee, that those who profess to believe that the world has persecuted and crucified thee, that those who believe that thou wert exposed to the wrath of God and the cruelty of men to ransom them from their crimes ; that those, I say, who believe all these truths, who consider thy body as the victim that was yielded up for their salvation, who consider the pleasures and the sins of the world as the only cause of thy sufferings, and the world itself as thy executioner, seek to flatter their bodies by these very pleasures, in this very world ; and that those who cannot, without shuddering with horror, see a man caress and cherish the murderer of his father, who would devote himself to give him life, can live as I have done, with full joy, in the world that I know to have been veritably the murderer of him whom I acknowledge for my God and my Father, who has delivered himself up for my own salvation, and who has borne in his person the penalty of my iniquities ? It is just, Lord, that thou shouldst have interrupted a joy so criminal as that in which I was reposing in the shadow of death.

XIII. Remove from me then, Lord, the sadness that the love of self might give me for my own sufferings and for the things of the world that do not succeed to the satisfaction of the inclinations of my heart, and that do not regard thy glory ; but create in me a sadness in conformity with thine. Let my sufferings serve to appease thy wrath. Make of them an occasion for my salvation and my conversion. Let me henceforth desire health and life only to employ them and end them for thee, with

thee and in thee I ask of thee neither health, nor sickness, nor life, nor death ; but that thou wilt dispose of my health and my sickness, my life and my death, for thy glory, for my salvation and for the utility of the Church and of thy saints, of whom I hope by thy grace to form a part. Thou alone knowest what is most expedient for me : thou art the sovereign master, do what thou wilt. Give to me, take from me ; but conform my will to thine ; and grant that in humble and perfect submission and in holy confidence, I may be disposed to receive the orders of thy eternal providence, and that I may adore alike all that comes to me from thee.

XIV. Grant, my God, that in a constantly equal uniformity of spirit I may receive all kinds of events, since we know not what we should ask, and since I cannot desire one more than another without presumption, and without rendering myself the judge of and responsible for the results that thy wisdom has rightly been pleased to hide from me. Lord, I know only that I know but one thing, that it is good to follow thee and that it is evil to offend thee. After this, I know not which is the better or worse of anything ; I know not which is more profitable to me, health or sickness, wealth or poverty, nor of all the things of the world. This is a discernment that exceeds the power of men or of angels, and that is hidden in the secrets of my providence which I adore, and which I wish not to fathom.

XV. Grant then, Lord, that such as I am I may conform myself to thy will ; and that being sick as I am, I may glorify thee in my sufferings. Without them I could not arrive at glory ; and thou, too, my Saviour, hast only wished to attain it through them. It was by the tokens of thy sufferings that thou wert recognized by thy disciples ; and it is by sufferings also that thou wilt recognize thy disciples. Acknowledge me then for thy disciple

in the evils which I endure both in my body and my mind, for the offences that I have committed. And since nothing is pleasing to God if it be not offered through thee, unite my will to thine, and my sorrows to those which thou hast suffered. Grant that mine may become thine. Unite me to thee ; fill me with thyself and with thy Holy Spirit. Enter into my heart and soul, to bear in them my sufferings, and to continue to endure in me what remains to thee to suffer of thy passion, that thou mayest complete in thy members even the perfect consummation of thy body, so that being full of thee, it may no longer be that I live and suffer, but that it may be thou that livest and sufferest in me, O my Saviour ! And that thus having some small part in thy sufferings, thou wilt fill me entirely with the glory that they have acquired for thee, in which thou wilt live with the Father and the Holy Spirit through ages upon ages. So be it

## THE ART OF PERSUASION

(OF THE GEOMETRICAL SPIRIT)

The art of persuasion has a necessary relation to the manner in which men are led to consent to that which is proposed to them, and to the conditions of things which it is sought to make them believe.

No one is ignorant that there are two avenues by which opinions are received into the soul, which are its two principal powers ; the understanding and the will The more natural is that of the understanding, for we should never consent to any but demonstrated truths ; but the more common, though the one contrary to Nature, is that of the will ; for all men are almost led to believe not of proof, but by attraction. This way is base, ignoble and irrelevant : everyone therefore disavows it Each one professes to believe and even to love nothing but what he knows to be worthy of belief and love.

I do not speak here of divine truths, which I shall take care not to comprise under the art of persuasion, because they are infinitely superior to Nature ; God alone can place them in the soul and in such a way as it pleases Him. I know that He has desired that they should enter from the heart into the mind, and not from the mind into the heart, to humiliate that proud power of reasoning that pretends to the right to be the judge of the things that the will chooses ; and to cure this infirm will which is wholly corrupted by its filthy attachments . . .

I speak only of the truths within our reach ; and it is

of them that I say that the mind and the heart are as doors by which they are received into the soul, but that very few enter by the mind, whilst they are brought in in crowds by the rash caprices of the will, without the counsel of the reason.

These powers have each their principles and their main-springs of action.

Those of the mind are truths which are natural and known to all the world, as that the whole is greater than its part, besides several particular maxims that are received by some and not by others, but which as soon as they are admitted are as powerful, although false, in carrying away belief, as those the most true.

Those of the will are certain desires natural and common to all mankind, as the desire of being happy, which no one can avoid having, besides several particular objects which each one follows in order to attain, and which having the power to please us are as powerful, although pernicious in fact, in causing the will to act, as though they made its veritable happiness.

So much for that which regards the powers that lead us to consent.

But as for the qualities of things which should persuade us, they are very different.

Some are drawn, by a necessary consequence, from common principles and admitted truths. These may be infallibly persuasive ; for in showing the harmony which they have with acknowledged principles there is an inevitable necessity of conviction, and it is impossible that they shall not be received into the soul as soon as it has been enabled to class them among the principles which it has already admitted.

There are some which have a close connection with the objects of our satisfaction ; and these again are received with certainty, for as soon as the soul has been made to

perceive that a thing can conduct it to that which it loves supremely, it must inevitably embrace it with joy.

But those which have this double union both with admitted truths and with the desires of the heart, are so sure of their effect that there is nothing that can be more so in Nature.

As, on the contrary, that which does not accord either with our belief or with our pleasures is importunate, false and absolutely alien to us.

In all these positions, there is no room for doubt. But there are some wherein the things which it is sought to make us believe are well established upon truths which are known, but which are at the same time contrary to the pleasures that interest us most. And these are in great danger of showing, by an experience which is only too common, what I said at the beginning—that this imperious soul, which boasted of acting only by reason, follows by a rash and shameful choice the desires of a corrupt will, whatever resistance may be opposed to it by the too enlightened mind.

Then it is that a doubtful balance is made between truth and pleasure, and that the knowledge of the one and the feeling of the other stir up a combat the success of which is very uncertain, since, in order to judge of it, it would be necessary to know all that passes in the innermost spirit of the man, of which the man himself is scarcely ever conscious.

It appears from this, that whatever it may be of which we wish to persuade men, it is necessary to have regard to the person whom we wish to persuade, of whom we must know the mind and the heart, what principles he acknowledges, what things he loves ; and then observe in the thing in question what affinity it has with the acknowledged principles, or with the objects so delightful by the pleasure which they give him.

So much the art of persuasion consists as much in that of pleasing as in that of convincing, so much more are men governed by caprice than by reason !

Now, of these two methods, the one of convincing, the other of pleasing, I shall only give here the rules of the first ; and this in case we have granted the principles, and remain firm in avowing them : otherwise I do not know whether there could be an art for adapting proofs to the inconstancy of our caprices.

But the manner of pleasing is incomparably more difficult, more subtle, more useful, and more admirable , therefore, if I do not treat of it, it is because I am not capable of it ; and I feel myself so far disproportionate to the task, that I believe the thing absolutely impossible.

Not that I do not believe that there may be as sure rules for pleasing as for demonstrating, and that he who knows perfectly how to comprehend and to practise them will as surely succeed in making himself beloved by princes and by people of all conditions, as in demonstrating the elements of geometry to those who have enough imagination to comprehend its hypotheses. But I consider, and it is, perhaps, my weakness that makes me believe it, that it is impossible to reach this. At least I know that if any are capable of it, they are certain persons whom I know, and that no others have such clear and such abundant light on this matter.

The reason of this extreme difficulty comes from the fact that the principles of pleasure are not firm and stable. They are different in all mankind, and variable in every particular with such a diversity that there is no man more different from another than from himself at different times. A man has other pleasures than a woman ; a rich man and a poor man have different enjoyments ; a prince, a warrior, a merchant, a citizen, a peasant, the

old, the young, the well, the sick, all vary ; the least accidents change them.

Now there is an art, and it is that which I give, for showing the connection of truths with their principles, wheth'r of truth or of pleasure, provided that the principles which have once been avowed remain firm, and without being ever contradicted

But as there are few principles of this kind, and as, apart from geometry, which deals only with very simple figures, there are hardly any truths upon which we always remain agreed, and still fewer objects of pleasure which we do not change every hour, I do not know whether there is a means of giving fixed rules for adapting discourse to the inconstancy of our caprices.

This art, which I call the *art of persuading*, and which, properly speaking, is simply the process of perfect methodical proofs, consists of three essential parts : of defining the terms of which we should avail ourselves by clear definitions ; of proposing principles or evident axioms to prove the thing in question ; and of always mentally substituting in the demonstrations the definition in the place of the thing defined.

The reason of this method is evident, since it would be useless to propose what it is sought to prove, and to undertake the demonstration of it, if all the terms which are not intelligible had not first been clearly defined ; and since it is necessary in the same manner that the demonstration should be preceded by the demand for the evident principles that are necessary to it, for if we do not secure the foundation we cannot secure the edifice ; and since, in fine, it is necessary in demonstrating mentally, to substitute the definitions in the place of the things defined, as otherwise there might be an abuse of the different meanings that are encountered in the terms. It is easy to see that, by observing this method, we are sure of convincing,



since the terms all being understood, and perfectly exempt from ambiguity by the definitions, and the principles being granted, if in the demonstration we always mentally substitute the definitions for the things defined, the invincible force of the conclusions cannot fail of having its whole effect.

Thus, never can a demonstration in which these conditions have been observed be subject to the slightest doubt ; and never can those have force in which they are wanting.

## SOME LETTERS TO MADEMOISELLE DE ROANNEZ

It is very certain that separation never takes place without pain. We do not feel our bond when we voluntarily follow the object that leads us, as St Augustine says ; but when we begin to resist and draw back, we suffer ; the bond stretches and suffers violence ; and this bond is our body, which is broken but by death. Our Lord has said that *since the coming of John the Baptist, that is, since his coming in each of the faithful, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by storm*. Before we are touched by the spirit we feel nothing but the burden of concupiscence that presses us to the earth. When God draws us on high, these two opposing efforts cause that violence which He alone can enable us to overcome. *But we can do all things*, says St. Leon, *with Him, without whom we can do nothing*. We must then resolve to endure this warfare all our lives ; for here there is no peace. *Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword*. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, as Scripture says, the *wisdom of this world is foolishness with God* ; so it may be said that this warfare which appears hard to men is peace with God, for it is the peace which Jesus Christ himself has brought us. Yet it will not be perfected until the body shall be destroyed ; and this it is which makes us wish for death, while we nevertheless cheerfully endure life for the love of Him who has suffered both life and death for us, and

who is able to give us more than we can ask or think, as says St Paul in the Epistle of to-day.

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God be praised, I have no more fears for you, but am full of hope ! These are consoling words indeed of Jesus Christ : *To him that hath shall be given.* By this promise, those who have received much have the right to hope for more, and those who have received extraordinarily should hope extraordinarily. I try as much as I can to let nothing distress me, and to take everything that happens as for the best I believe that this is a duty, and that we sin in not doing so. For, in short, the reason why sins are sins is only because they are contrary to the will of God : and the essence of sin thus consisting in having a will opposed to that which we know to be of God, it is plain, it appears to me, that when He discovers His will to us by events, it would be a sin not to conform ourselves to it. I have learned that in everything that happens there is something worthy of admiration, since the will of God is manifest in it I praise Him with all my heart for the continuation of His favours, for I see plainly that they do not diminish.

The affair of . . . does not go on very well . it is a thing that makes those tremble who are truly the children of God to see the persecution which is in preparation, not only against individuals (this would be little) but against the Truth. To speak truly, God is indeed abandoned. It appears to me that this is a time in which the service that we render Him is very pleasing to Him He desires that we should judge of grace by Nature, and thus we may be allowed to suppose that as a prince driven from his country by his subjects feels extreme tenderness for those who remain faithful to him amidst the public revolt, in the same manner, God looks with especial favour upon

those who are at this time defending the purity of religion and morals, so warmly assailed. But there is this difference between the kings of the earth and the King of kings, that the princes do not render their subjects faithful, but find them so ; whilst God never finds men other than unfaithful, and renders them faithful when they are so. So that while the kings of the earth are under signal obligations to those who adhere to their allegiance, it happens, on the contrary, that those who subsist in the service of God are themselves infinitely indebted to Him. Let us continue then to praise Him for this grace, if He has bestowed it upon us, for which we shall praise Him throughout eternity, and let us pray that He may give us still more of it, and that He may look with pity upon us and upon the whole Church, outside of which there is nothing but malediction.

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Whatever may come of the affair of . . . , enough, thank God, has already been done to draw an admirable advantage from it against these accursed precepts. There is need that those who have taken any part in this should render great thanks to God, and that their relatives and friends should pray to God for them that they may not fall from the great happiness and honour which He has bestowed on them. All the honours of the world are but the image of this ; this alone is solid and real, and nevertheless it is useless without the right frame of heart. It is not bodily austerities nor mental exercises, but good impulses of the heart, which are of merit and which sustain the sufferings of the body and the mind. For in short two things are necessary for sanctification—sufferings and joys. St. Paul says that *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*. This should console those who experience tribulation, since, being warned that the path

to heaven which they seek is filled with it, they should rejoice at meeting tokens that they are in the right way. But these very sufferings are not without joys, and are never surmounted but by pleasure. For as those who forsake God to return to the world do it only because they find more enjoyment in the pleasures of the world than in those of a union with God, and because this conquering charm leads them away and, making them repent of their first choice, renders them *penitents of the devil*, according to the saying of Tertullian ; so none would ever quit the pleasures of the world to embrace the cross of Jesus Christ, did he not find more enjoyment in contempt, in poverty, in destitution and in the scorn of men, than in the delights of sin. And thus, says Tertullian, *it must not be supposed that the Christian's life is a life of sadness*. We forsake pleasures only for others which are greater. *Pray without ceasing*, says St. Paul, *in everything give thanks, rejoice evermore*. It is the joy of having found God that is the principle of the sorrow of having offended Him, and of the whole change of life. He that finds a treasure in a field, according to Jesus Christ, has such joy that he goes directly and sells all that he has to purchase the field. The people of the world know nothing of this joy, *which the world can neither give nor take away*, as is said by Jesus Christ. The blessed have this joy without sorrow, the people of the world have their sorrows without this joy, and Christians have this joy mingled with the sorrow of having pursued other pleasures and the fear of losing it by the allurements of these same pleasures which tempt us without ceasing. And thus we should labour unceasingly to cherish this joy which moderates our fear, and to preserve this fear which preserves our joy, so that on feeling ourselves too much carried away by the one we may incline towards the other, and thus remain poised between the two. *In the day of prosperity be joyful ; but in the day of adversity consider, says*

the Scripture, and so it shall be till the promise of Jesus Christ shall be accomplished in us that our joy shall be full. Let us not then be cast down by sadness, nor believe that piety consists only in bitterness without consolation. The true piety, which is found perfect only in heaven, is so full of satisfactions that it overflows with them in its beginning, its progress and its consummation. Its light is so shining that it is reflected on all about it ; and if there is sadness mingled with it, especially at the outset, this comes from ourselves and not from virtue ; for it is not the effect of the piety that is springing up in us, but of the impiety that still is there. Remove the impiety and the joy will be unalloyed. Let us not ascribe this then to devotion, but to ourselves, and seek relief from it only through our correction.

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I pity the person whom you know in the disquietude in which I know she is, and in which I am not surprised to see her. It is a little day of judgment which cannot come without a universal emotion of the person, as the general judgment will cause a general emotion in the world, those excepted who shall have already judged themselves, as she pretends to have done. This temporal suffering would guarantee her from the eternal, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, who has endured it and rendered it His own ; thus it is that should console her. Our yoke is also His own ; without this it would be insupportable.

*Take my yoke upon you*, says He. It is not our yoke ; it is His, and He also bears it. *Know*, says He, *that my yoke is easy and light*. It is light only to Him, and to His divine power. I would say to her that she should remember that these disquietudes come not from the good that is springing up in her, but from the evil which is still remaining and must be continually diminished ; that she must do like a

child that is being torn by robbers from the arms of its mother who will not let it go ; for it should not charge the mother that fondly holds it back with the violence that it suffers, but its unjust ravishers. The whole office of Advent is well fitted to give courage to the weak ; these words of Scripture : *Take courage, ye fearful and unbelieving, behold, your Redeemer cometh*, are often repeated there, and in the vesper service of to-day it is said . " Take courage and fear not ; for your God shall come to save and deliver you."

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Your letter has given me the greatest joy. I confess that I was beginning to fear or at least to be astonished I know not what was the beginning of the trouble of which you speak ; but I know that trouble must come. I was reading the thirteenth chapter of St. Mark I was thinking of writing you ; and I will tell you therefore what I found in it. Jesus Christ is there addressing a solemn discourse to His disciples on His second coming ; and as whatever happens to the Church happens also to each individual Christian, it is certain that this whole chapter predicts the state of each person in whom on conversion the old man is destroyed, as well as that of the whole universe which shall be destroyed to give place to a new heaven and a new earth, as the Scripture says. And thus I should think that the overthrow of the reprobate temple, which prefigures the overthrow of the reprobate man within us, and of which it is said that there shall not be one stone left upon another, indicates that no passion of the old man shall remain ; and these fierce contentions, both civil and domestic, represent so well the internal conflicts experienced by those who give themselves up to God, that nothing can be better depicted.

But very striking are these words *When ye shall see*

*the abomination of desolation in the holy place, let not him that is on the house-top go into the house.* It seems to me that this perfectly predicts the times in which we live, in which moral corruption is in the houses of sanctity and in the books of theologians and ecclesiastics, in which we should least expect it. We must shun such disorder ; and woe to those with child and to those that give suck in those days, that is to those that are held back by worldly ties ! The words of a sainted woman are applicable here . “ We are not to consider whether we are called to quit the world, but solely whether we are called to remain in it, as we should not deliberate whether we were called to fly a house infected with plague or on fire.”

This chapter of the Evangelist, which I should like to read with you entire, concludes with an exhortation to watch and pray in order to shun all these misfortunes, and in truth, it is proper indeed that when the danger is continual the prayer should be continual also.

For this purpose I send the prayers which were asked of me ; it is now three in the afternoon. Since your departure a miracle has been performed upon a nun of Pontoise, who, without leaving her convent, has been cured of an extraordinary headache by an act of devotion to the holy Thorn. I will tell you more about it another time. But I must quote to you, in respect of this, an excellent saying of St. Augustine, very consoling to certain persons, that those alone really see miracles whom the miracles benefit ; for they are not seen at all if they do not benefit.

I am under obligations that I cannot sufficiently express for the present which you have made me ; I did not know what it could be, for I unfolded it before reading your letter, and I afterwards repented for not having rendered to it at first the respect that was due to it. It is a truth that the Holy Spirit reposes invisibly in the relics of those who have died in the grace of God, until they shall appear



visibly in the Resurrection, and this it is that renders the relics of the saints so worthy of veneration. For God never abandons His own, even in the sepulchre in which their bodies, though dead to the eyes of men, are more than ever living in the sight of God, since sin is no more in them ; whilst it constantly resides in them during life, at least in its root, for the fruits of sin are not always in them ; and this fatal root, which is inseparable from them in life, causes it to be forbidden us during life to honor them, since they are rather worthy of detestation. It is for this that death becomes necessary to mortify entirely this fatal root, and this it is that renders it desirable. But it is of no use to tell you what you know so well ; it would be better to tell it to the other persons of whom you speak, but they would not listen to it.

## THOUGHTS

(PENSÉES)

(Notes for an "Apology for the Christian Religion")

Before entering into the proofs of the Christian religion, I find it necessary to point out the sinfulness of those men who live in indifference to the search for truth in a matter which is so important to them, and which touches them so nearly.

Of all their errors, this doubtless is the one which most convicts them of foolishness and blindness, and in which it is easiest to confound them by the first glimmerings of common sense, and by natural feelings.

For it is not to be doubted that the duration of this life is but a moment ; that the state of death is eternal, whatever may be its nature ; and that thus all our actions and thoughts must take such different directions according to the state of that eternity, that it is impossible to take one step with sense and judgment, unless we regulate our course by the truth of that point which ought to be our ultimate end.

There is nothing clearer than this ; and thus, according to the principles of reason, the conduct of men is wholly unreasonable if they do not take another course.

On this point therefore we condemn those who live without thought of the ultimate end of life, who let themselves be guided by their own inclinations and their own pleasures without reflection and without concern, and, as

if they could annihilate eternity by turning away their thought from it, think only of making themselves happy for the moment.

Yet this eternity exists, and death, which must open into it, and threatens them every hour, must in a little time infallibly put them under the dreadful necessity of being either annihilated or unhappy for ever, without knowing which of these eternities is for ever prepared for them

This is a doubt of terrible consequence They are in peril of eternal woe, and thereupon, as if the matter were not worth the trouble, they neglect to inquire whether this is one of those opinions which people receive with too credulous a facility, or one of those which, obscure in themselves, have a very firm, though hidden, foundation Thus they know not whether there be truth or falsity in the matter, nor whether there be strength or weakness in the proofs They have them before their eyes; they refuse to look at them; and in that ignorance they choose all that is necessary to fall into this misfortune if it exist, to await death to make trial of it, yet to be very content in this state, to make profession of it and indeed to boast of it. Can we think seriously on the importance of this subject without being horrified at conduct so extravagant?

This resting in ignorance is a monstrous thing, and they who pass their life in it must be made to feel its extravagance and stupidity by having it shown to them, so that they may be confounded by the sight of their folly. For this is how men reason, when they choose to live in such ignorance of what they are, and without seeking enlightenment. "I know not," they say.

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. . . Let them at least learn what is the religion they attack, before attacking it If this religion boasted of having

a clear view of God, and of possessing it open and unveiled, it would be attacking it to say that we see nothing in the world which shows it with this clearness. But since, on the contrary, it says that men are in darkness and estranged from God, that He has hidden Himself from their knowledge, that this is in fact the name which He gives Himself in the Scriptures, *Deus absconditus*,<sup>1</sup> and finally, if it endeavours equally to establish these two things: that God has set up in the Church visible signs to make Himself known to those who should seek Him sincerely, and that He has nevertheless so disguised them that He will only be perceived by those who seek Him with all their heart; what advantage can they obtain, when, in the negligence with which they make profession of being in search of the truth, they cry out that nothing reveals it to them; and since that darkness in which they are, and with which they upbraid the Church, establishes only one of the things which she affirms, without touching the other, and, very far from destroying, proves her doctrine?

In order to attack it, they should have protested that they had made every effort to seek Him everywhere, and even in that which the Church proposes for their instruction, but without satisfaction. If they talked in this manner they would in truth be attacking one of her pretensions. But I hope here to show that no reasonable person can speak thus, and I venture even to say that no one has ever done so. We know well enough how those who are of this mind behave. They believe they have made great efforts for their instruction when they have spent a few hours in reading some book of Scripture and have questioned some priest on the truths of the faith. After that, they boast of having made vain search in books and among men. But, verily, I will tell them what I have often said, that this negligence is insufferable. We are not here

<sup>1</sup> "A hidden God."—Isaiah, xlv 15

concerned with the trifling interest of some stranger that we should treat it in this fashion ; the matter concerns ourselves and our all.

The immortality of the soul is a matter which is of so great consequence to us, and which touches us so profoundly that we must have lost all feeling to be indifferent as to knowing what it is. All our actions and thoughts must take such different courses, according as there are or are not eternal joys to hope for, that it is impossible to take one step with sense and judgment, unless we regulate our course by our view of this point which ought to be our ultimate end.

Thus our first interest and our first duty is to enlighten ourselves on this subject, whereon depends all our conduct. Therefore among those who do not believe, I make a vast difference between those who strive with all their power to inform themselves and those who live without troubling or thinking about it.

I can have only compassion for those who sincerely bewail their doubt, who regard it as the greatest of misfortunes, and who, sparing no effort to escape it, make of this inquiry their principal and most serious occupation.

But as for those who pass their life without thinking of this ultimate end of life, and who, for this sole reason that they do not find within themselves the lights which convince them of it, neglect to seek them elsewhere, and to examine thoroughly whether this opinion is one of those which people receive with credulous simplicity, or one of those which, although obscure in themselves, have nevertheless a solid and immovable foundation, I look upon them in a manner quite different.

This carelessness in a matter which concerns themselves, their eternity, their all, moves me more to anger than pity ; it astonishes and shocks me ; it is to me monstrous. I do not say this out of the pious zeal of a spiritual

devotion I expect, on the contrary, that we ought to have this feeling from principles of human interest and self-love ; for this we need only see what the least enlightened persons see.

We do not require great education of the mind to understand that here is no real and lasting satisfaction ; that our pleasures are only vanity ; that our evils are infinite ; and, lastly, that death, which threatens us every moment, must infallibly place us within a few years under the dreadful necessity of being for ever either annihilated or unhappy.

There is nothing more real than this, nothing more terrible Be as heroic as we like, that is the end which awaits the noblest life in the world. Let us reflect on this, and then say whether it is not beyond doubt that there is no good in this life but in the hope of another ; that we are happy only in proportion as we draw near it ; and that, as there are no more woes for those who have complete assurance of eternity, so there is no more happiness for those who have no insight into it.

Surely then it is a great evil thus to be in doubt, but it is at least an indispensable duty to seek when we are in such doubt ; and thus the doubter who does not seek is altogether completely unhappy and completely wrong. And if besides this he is easy and content, professes to be so, and indeed boasts of it ; if it is this state itself which is the subject of his joy and vanity, I have no words to describe so silly a creature.

How can people hold these opinions ? What joy can we find in the expectation of nothing but hopeless misery ? What reason for boasting that we are in impenetrable darkness ? And how can it happen that the following argument occurs to a reasonable man ?

“I know not who put me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I myself am. I am in terrible

ignorance of everything. I know not what my body is, nor my senses, nor my soul, nor even that part of me which thinks what I say, which reflects on all and on itself, and knows itself no more than the rest. I see those frightful spaces of the universe which surround me, and I find myself tied to one corner of this vast expanse, without knowing why I am put in this place rather than in another, nor why the short time which is given me to live is assigned to me at this point rather than at another of the whole eternity which was before me or which shall come after me. I see nothing but infinities on all sides, which surround me as an atom, and as a shadow which endures only for an instant and returns no more. All I know is that I must soon die, but what I know least is this very death which I cannot escape.

"As I know not whence I come, so I know not whither I go. I know only that, in leaving this world, I fall for ever either into annihilation or into the hands of an angry God, without knowing to which of these two states I shall be for ever assigned. Such is my state, full of weakness and uncertainty. And from all this I conclude that I ought to spend all the days of my life without caring to inquire into what must happen to me. Perhaps I might find some solution to my doubts, but I will not take the trouble, nor take a step to seek it; and after treating with scorn those who are concerned with this care, I will go without foresight and without fear to try the great event, and let myself be led carelessly to death, uncertain of the eternity of my future state."

Who would desire to have for a friend a man who talks in this fashion? Who would choose him out from others to tell him of his affairs? Who would have recourse to him in affliction? And indeed to what use in life could one put him?

In truth, it is the glory of religion to have for enemies

men so unreasonable : and their opposition to it is so little dangerous that it serves on the contrary to establish its truths. For the Christian faith goes mainly to establish these two facts, the corruption of Nature and redemption by Jesus Christ. Now I contend that if these men do not serve to prove the truth of the redemption by the holiness of their behaviour, they at least serve admirably to show the corruption of Nature by sentiments so unnatural

Nothing is so important to man as his own state, nothing is so formidable to him as eternity , and thus it is not natural that there should be men indifferent to the loss of their existence and to the perils of everlasting suffering. They are quite different with regard to all other things. They are afraid of mere trifles ; they foresee them , they feel them. And this same man who spends so many days and nights in rage and despair for the loss of office, or for some imaginary insult to his honour, is the very one who knows without anxiety and without emotion that he will lose all by death. It is a monstrous thing to see in the same heart and at the same time this sensibility to trifles and this strange insensibility to the greatest objects. It is an incomprehensible enchantment and a supernatural slumber, which indicates as its cause an all-powerful force.

There must be a strange confusion in the nature of man, that he should boast of being in that state in which it seems incredible that a single individual should be. However, experience has shown me so great a number of such persons that the fact would be surprising, if we did not know that the greater part of those who trouble themselves about the matter are disingenuous, and not in fact what they say. They are people who have heard it said that it is the fashion to be thus daring. It is what they call shaking off the yoke, and they try to imitate this. But it would not be difficult to make them understand how greatly they deceive themselves in thus seeking esteem. This is not the



way to gain it, even I say among those men of the world who take a healthy view of things, and who know that the only way to succeed in this life is to make ourselves appear honourable, faithful, judicious and capable of useful service to a friend ; because naturally men love only what may be useful to them. Now, what do we gain by hearing it said of a man that he has now thrown off the yoke, that he does not believe there is a God who watches our actions, that he considers himself the sole master of his conduct, and that he thinks he is accountable for it only to himself ? Does he think that he has thus brought us to have henceforth complete confidence in him, and to look to him for consolation, advice and help in every need of life ? Do they profess to have delighted us by telling us that they hold our soul to be only a little wind and smoke, especially by telling us this in a haughty and self-satisfied tone of voice ? Is this a thing to say gaily ? Is it not, on the contrary, a thing to say sadly, as the saddest thing in the world ?

If they thought of it seriously they would see that this is so bad a mistake, so contrary to good sense, so opposed to decency, and so removed in every respect from that good breeding which they seek, that they would be more likely to correct than to pervert those who had an inclination to follow them. And indeed, make them give an account of their opinions, and of the reasons which they have for doubting religion, and they will say to you things so feeble and so petty that they will persuade you of the contrary. The following is what a person one day said to such a one very appositely, "If you continue to talk in this manner, you will really make me religious." And he was right, for who would not have a horror of holding opinions in which he would have such contemptible persons as companions !

Thus those who only feign these opinions would be

very unhappy, if they restrained their natural feelings in order to make themselves the most concerted of men. If, at the bottom of their heart, they are troubled at not having more light, let them not disguise the fact ; this avowal will not be shameful. The only shame is to have none. Nothing reveals more an extreme weakness of mind than not to know the misery of a godless man. Nothing is more indicative of a bad disposition of heart than not to desire the truth of eternal promises. Nothing is more dastardly than to act the bravado before God. Let them then leave these impieties to those who are sufficiently ill-bred to be really capable of them. Let them at least be honest men if they cannot be Christians. Finally, let them recognize that there are two kinds of people one can call reasonable ; those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, and those who seek Him with all their heart because they do not know Him.

But as for those who live without knowing Him and without seeking Him, they judge themselves so little worthy of their own care that they are not worthy of the care of others ; and it needs all the charity of the religion which they despise, not to despise them even to the point of leaving them to their folly. But because this religion obliges us always to regard them, so long as they are in this life, as capable of the grace which can enlighten them, and to believe that they may, in a little time, be more replenished with faith than we are, and that, on the other hand, we may fall into the blindness wherein they are, we must do for them what we would they should do for us if we were in their place, and call upon them to have pity upon themselves, and to take at least some steps in the endeavour to find light. Let them give to reading this some of the hours which they otherwise employ so uselessly ; whatever aversion they may bring to the task, they will perhaps gain something, and at least will not lose much. But as for

those who bring to the task perfect sincerity and a real desire to meet with truth, those I hope will be satisfied and convinced of the proofs of a religion so divine



The first thing which presents itself to man when he considers himself is his body, that is, a certain portion of matter which is proper to him. But to understand what that is he must compare it with all that is above him and all that is below, in order to recognize its just limits. Let him not stop then to regard simply the objects which surround him, let man contemplate the whole of Nature in her full and grand majesty. Let him gaze on that brilliant light, set like an eternal lamp to illumine the universe ; let the earth appear to him a point in comparison with the vast circle described by the sun ; and let him wonder at the fact that this vast circle is itself but a very fine point in comparison with that described by the stars in their revolution round the firmament. But if our view be arrested there, let our imagination pass beyond , it will sooner exhaust the power of conception than Nature that of supplying material for conception. The whole visible world is only an imperceptible atom in the ample bosom of Nature. No idea approaches it. We may enlarge our conceptions beyond all imaginable space , we only produce atoms in comparison with the reality of things. It is an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. In short it is the greatest sensible mark of the almighty power of God, that imagination loses itself in that thought.

Returning to himself, let man consider what he is in comparison with all existence ; let him regard himself as lost in this remote corner of Nature ; and from the little cell in which he finds himself lodged, I mean the

universe, let him estimate at their true value the earth, kingdoms, cities and himself. What is a man in the Infinite ?

But to show him another prodigy equally astonishing, let him examine the most delicate things he knows. Let a mite be given him, with its minute body and parts incomparably more minute, limbs with their joints, veins in the limbs, blood in the veins, humours in the blood, drops in the humours, vapours in the drops. Dividing these last things again, let him exhaust his powers of conception, and let the last object at which he can arrive be now that of our discourse. Perhaps he will think that here is the smallest point in Nature. I will let him see therein a new abyss. I will paint for him not only the visible universe, but all that he can conceive of Nature's immensity in the womb of this abridged atom. Let him see therein an infinity of universes, each of which has its firmament, its planets, its earth, in the same proportion as in the visible world, in each earth animals, and in the last mites, in which he will find again all that the first had, finding still in these others the same thing without end and without cessation. Let him lose himself in wonders as amazing in their littleness as the others in their vastness. For who will not be astounded at the fact that our body, which a little ago was imperceptible in the universe, itself imperceptible in the bosom of the whole, is now a colossus, a world, or rather a whole, in respect of the nothingness which we cannot reach ? He who regards himself in this light will be afraid of himself, and observing himself sustained in the body given him by Nature between those two abysses of the Infinite and Nothing, will tremble at the sight of these marvels ; and I think that, as his curiosity changes into admiration, he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence than to examine them with presumption.

For in fact what is man in Nature ? A Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with

the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything. Since he is infinitely removed from comprehending the extremes, the end of things and their beginning are hopelessly hidden from him in an impenetrable secret ; he is equally incapable of seeing the Nothing from which he was made and the Infinite in which he is swallowed up.

What will he do, then, but perceive the appearance of the middle of things in an eternal despair of knowing either their beginning or their end ? All things proceed from the Nothing and are borne towards the Infinite. Who will follow these marvellous processes ? The Author of these wonders understands them. None other can do so.

Through failure to contemplate these Infinities, men have rashly rushed into the examination of Nature, as though they bore some proportion to her. It is strange that they have wished to understand the beginnings of things, and thence to arrive at the knowledge of the whole, with a presumption as infinite as their object. For surely this design cannot be formed without presumption or without a capacity infinite like Nature

If we are well-informed, we understand that, as Nature has graven her image and that of her Author on all things, they almost all partake of her double infinity. Thus we see that all the sciences are infinite in the extent of their researches. For who doubts that geometry, for instance, has an infinite infinity of problems to solve ? They are also infinite in the multitude and fineness of their premises ; for it is clear that those which are put forward as ultimate are not self-supporting, but are based on others which, again having others for their support, do not permit of finality. But we represent some as ultimate for reason, in the same way as in regard to material objects we call that an indivisible point beyond which our senses can no longer perceive anything, although by its nature it is infinitely divisible.

Of these two Infinites of science, that of greatness is the most palpable, and hence a few persons have pretended to know all things. "I will speak of the whole," said Democritus.

But the infinitely little is the least obvious. Philosophers have much oftener claimed to have reached it, and it is here they have all stumbled. This has given rise to such common titles as *First Principles*, *Principles of Philosophy*, and the like, as ostentatious in fact, though not in appearance, as that one which blinds us, *De omni scibili*.<sup>1</sup>

We naturally believe ourselves far more capable of reaching the centre of things than of embracing their circumference. The visible extent of the world visibly exceeds us, but as we exceed little things, we think ourselves more capable of knowing them. And yet we need no less capacity for attaining the Nothing than the All. Infinite capacity is required for both, and it seems to me that whoever shall have understood the ultimate principles of being might also attain to the knowledge of the Infinite. The one depends on the other, and one leads to the other. These extremes meet and reunite by force of distance, and find each other in God, and in God alone.

Let us then take our compass ; we are something and we are not everything. The nature of our existence hides from us the knowledge of first beginnings which are born of the Nothing ; and the littleness of our being conceals from us the sight of the Infinite.

Our intellect holds the same position in the world of thought as our body occupies in the expanse of Nature.

Limited as we are in every way, this state which holds the mean between two extremes is present in all our impotence. Our senses perceive no extreme. Too much

<sup>1</sup> "Concerning everything knowable"—the title under which Pico della Mirandola announced the 900 propositions which he undertook to defend in 1486

sound deafens us ; too much light dazzles us ; too great distance or proximity hinders our view. Too great length and too great brevity of discourse tend to obscurity ; too much truth is paralysing (I know some who cannot understand that to take four from nothing leaves nothing). First principles are too self-evident for us ; too much pleasure disagrees with us. Too many concords are annoying in music ; too many benefits irritate us , we wish to have the wherewithal to over-pay our debts. *Beneficia eo usque læta sunt dum videntur exsolvi posse ; ubi multum antevenere, pro gratia odium redditur.*<sup>1</sup> We feel neither extreme heat nor extreme cold. Excessive qualities are prejudicial to us and not perceptible by the senses ; we do not feel but suffer them. Extreme youth and extreme age hinder the mind, as also too much and too little education. In short, extremes are for us as though they were not, and we are not within their notice. They escape us, or we them.

This is our true state , this is what makes us incapable of certain knowledge and of absolute ignorance. We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and to fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us ; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us, and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition, and yet most contrary to our inclination ; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation whereon to build a tower reaching to the Infinite. But our whole groundwork cracks and the earth opens to abysses.

Let us therefore not look for certainty and stability. Our reason is always deceived by fickle shadows ; nothing

<sup>1</sup> " Benefits are pleasant while it seems possible to requite them , when they become much greater, they produce hatred rather than gratitude "—TACITUS.

can fix the finite between the two Infinities, which both enclose and fly from it

If this be well understood, I think that we shall remain at rest, each in the state wherein Nature has placed him. As this sphere which has fallen to us as our lot is always distant from either extreme, what matters it that man should have a little more knowledge of the universe? If he has it, he but gets a little higher. Is he not always infinitely removed from the end, and is not the duration of our life equally removed from eternity, even if it lasts ten years longer?

In comparison with these Infinities all finites are equal, and I see no reason for fixing our imagination on one more than on another. The only comparison which we make of ourselves to the finite is painful to us.

If man made himself the first object of study, he would see how incapable he is of going further. How can a part know the whole? But he may perhaps aspire to know at least the parts to which he bears some proportion. But the parts of the world are all so related and linked to one another, that I believe it impossible to know one without the other and without the whole.

Man, for instance, is related to all he knows. He needs a place wherein to abide, time through which to live, motion in order to live, elements to compose him, warmth and food to nourish him, air to breathe. He sees light; he feels bodies; in short, he is in a dependent alliance with everything. To know man, then, it is necessary to know how it happens that he needs air to live, and to know the air we must know how it is thus related to the life of man, etc. Flame cannot exist without air; therefore to understand the one, we must understand the other.

Since everything then is cause and effect, dependent and supporting, mediate and immediate, and all is held together by a natural though imperceptible chain, which binds together things most distant and most different, I hold it



equally impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole, and to know the whole without knowing the parts in detail.

[The eternity of things in itself or in God must also astonish our brief duration. The fixed and constant immobility of Nature, in comparison with the continual change which goes on within us, must have the same effect.]

And what completes our incapability of knowing things is the fact that they are simple, and that we are composed of two opposite natures, different in kind, soul and body. For it is impossible that our rational part should be other than spiritual; and if anyone maintain that we are simply corporeal, this would far more exclude us from the knowledge of things, there being nothing so inconceivable as to say that matter knows itself. It is impossible to imagine how it should know itself.

So if we are simply material, we can know nothing at all; and if we are composed of mind and matter, we cannot know perfectly things which are simple, whether spiritual or corporeal. Hence it comes that almost all philosophers have confused ideas of things, and speak of material things in spiritual terms, and of spiritual things in material terms. For they say boldly that bodies have a tendency to fall, that they seek after their centre, that they fly from destruction, that they fear the void, that they have inclinations, sympathies, antipathies, all of which attributes pertain only to mind. And in speaking of minds, they consider them as in a place, and attribute to them movement from one place to another; and these are qualities which belong only to bodies.

Instead of receiving the ideas of these things in their purity, we colour them with our own qualities and stamp with our composite being all the simple things which we contemplate.

Who would not think, seeing us compose all things of mind and body, but that this mixture would be quite intelligible to us? Yet it is the very thing we least understand. Man is to himself the most wonderful object in Nature; for he cannot conceive what the body is, still less what the mind is, and least of all how a body should be united to a mind. This is the consummation of his difficulties, and yet it is his very being. *Modus quo corporibus adhærent spiritus comprehendere ab hominibus non potest, et hoc tamen homo est.*<sup>1</sup> Finally, to complete the proof of our weakness, I shall conclude with these two considerations . . .

\* \* \*

When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space which I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant, and which know me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there; for there is no reason why here rather than there, why now rather than then. Who has put me here? By whose order and direction have this place and time been allotted to me? *Memoria hospitii unius diei prætereuntis.*<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

When I see the blindness and the wretchedness of man, when I regard the whole silent universe, and man without light, left to himself, and, as it were, lost in this corner of the universe, without knowing who has put him there, what he has come to do, what will become of him at

<sup>1</sup> "The manner in which spirits are united to bodies cannot be understood by men, yet such is man"—ST AUGUSTINE

<sup>2</sup> "The remembrance of a guest of one day, that passeth by"—*Wisdom*  
v 15.

death, and incapable of all knowledge, I become terrified, like a man who should be carried in his sleep to a dreadful desert island, and should awake without knowing where he is, and without means of escape. And thereupon I wonder how people in a condition so wretched do not fall into despair. I see other persons around me of a like nature. I ask them if they are better informed than I am. They tell me that they are not. And thereupon these wretched and lost beings, having looked around them and seen some pleasing objects, have given and attached themselves to them. For my own part I have not been able to attach myself to them, and, considering how strongly it appears that there is something else than what I see, I have examined whether this God has not left some sign of Himself

\* \* \*

The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me

\* \* \*

How many kingdoms know us not ?

\* \* \*

Why is my knowledge limited ? Why my stature ? Why my life to one hundred years rather than to a thousand ? What reason has Nature had for giving me such, and for choosing this number rather than another in the infinity of those from which there is no more reason to choose one than another, trying nothing else ?

\* \* \*

*Diversion*—When I have occasionally set myself to consider the different distractions of men, the pains and perils to which they expose themselves at court or in war,

whence arise so many quarrels, passions, bold and often bad ventures, etc, I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber. A man who has enough to live on, if he knew how to stay with pleasure at home, would not leave it to go to sea or to besiege a town. A commission in the army would not be bought so dearly, but that it is found insufferable not to budge from the town; and men only seek conversation and entertaining games because they cannot remain with pleasure at home.

But on further consideration, when, after finding the cause of all our ills, I have sought to discover the reason of it, I have found that there is one very real reason, namely, the natural poverty of our feeble and mortal condition, so miserable that nothing can comfort us when we think of it closely.

Whatever condition we picture to ourselves, if we muster all the good things which it is possible to possess, royalty is the finest position in the world. Yet, when we imagine a king attended with every pleasure he can feel, if he be without diversion, and be left to consider and reflect on what he is, this feeble happiness will not sustain him; he will necessarily fall into forebodings of dangers, of revolutions which may happen, and, finally, of death and inevitable disease; so that if he be without what is called diversion, he is unhappy, and more unhappy than the least of his subjects who plays and diverts himself.

*Reasons why we like the chase better than the quarry.*—Hence it comes that play and the society of women, war and high posts, are so sought after. Not that there is in fact any happiness in them, or that men imagine true bliss to consist in money won at play, or in the hare which they hunt, we would not take these as a gift. We do not seek that easy and peaceful lot which permits us to think of our unhappy condition, or the dangers of war, or the

labour of office, but the bustle which averts these thoughts of ours and amuses us.

Hence it comes that men so much love noise and stir ; hence it comes that the prison is so horrible a punishment ; hence it comes that the pleasure of solitude is a thing incomprehensible. And it is in fact the greatest source of happiness in the condition of kings that men try incessantly to divert them, and to procure for them all kinds of pleasures.

The king is surrounded by persons whose only thought is to divert the king and to prevent his thinking of self. For he is unhappy, king though he be, if he think of himself.

This is all that men have been able to discover to make themselves happy. And those who philosophize on the matter and who think men unreasonable for spending a whole day in chasing a hare which they would not have bought, scarce know our nature. The hare in itself would not screen us from the sight of death and calamities ; but the chase which turns away our attention from these does screen us.

The advice given to Pyrrhus, to take the rest which he was about to seek with so much labour, was full of difficulties

[To bid a man live quietly is to bid him] live happily. It is to advise him to be in a state perfectly happy, in which he can think at leisure without finding therein a cause of distress. This is to misunderstand Nature.

As men who naturally understand their own condition avoid nothing so much as rest, so there is nothing they leave undone in seeking turmoil. Not that they have an instinctive knowledge of true happiness. . . .

So we are wrong in blaming them. Their error does not lie in seeking excitement, if they seek it only as a diversion ; the evil is that they seek it as if the possession of the

objects of their quest would make them really happy. In this respect it is right to call their quest a vain one. Hence in all this both the censurers and the censured do not understand man's true nature

And thus, when we take the exception against them, that what they seek with such fervour cannot satisfy them, if they replied—as they should do if they considered the matter thoroughly—that they sought in it only a violent and impetuous occupation which turned their thoughts from self, and that they therefore chose an attractive object to charm and ardently attract them, they would leave their opponents without a reply. But they do not make this reply, because they do not know themselves. They do not know that it is the chase, and not the quarry, which they seek.

[Dancing : we must consider rightly where to place our feet.

—A gentleman sincerely believes that hunting is great and royal sport ; but a beater is not of this opinion.]

They imagine that if they obtained such a post, they would then rest with pleasure, and are insensible of the insatiable nature of their desire. They think they are truly seeking quiet, and they are only seeking excitement

They have a secret instinct which impels them to seek amusement and occupation abroad, and which arises from the sense of their constant unhappiness. They have another secret instinct, a remnant of the greatness of our original nature, which teaches them that happiness in reality consists only in rest, and not in stir. And of these two contrary instincts they form within themselves a confused idea, which hides itself from their view in the depths of their soul, inciting them to aim to rest through excitement, and always to fancy that the satisfaction which they have not will come to them, if, by surmounting whatever difficulties confront them, they can thereby open the door to rest.

Thus passes away all man's life. Men seek rest in a struggle against difficulties, and when they have conquered these, rest becomes insufferable. For we think either of the misfortunes we have or of those which threaten us. And even if we should see ourselves sufficiently sheltered on all sides, weariness of its own accord would not fail to arise from the depths of the heart wherein it has its natural roots, and to fill the mind with its poison.

Thus so wretched is man that he would weary even without any cause for weariness from the peculiar state of his disposition; and so frivolous is he, that, though full of a thousand reasons for weariness, the least thing, such as playing billiards or hitting a ball, is sufficient to amuse him.

But will you say what object he has in all this? The pleasure of bragging to-morrow among his friends that he has played better than another. So others sweat in their own rooms to show to the learned that they have solved a problem in algebra, which no one had hitherto been able to solve. Many more expose themselves to extreme perils, in my opinion as foolishly, in order to boast afterwards that they have captured a town. Lastly, others wear themselves out in studying all these things, not in order to become wiser, but only in order to prove that they know them; and these are the most senseless of the band, since they are so knowingly, whereas one may suppose of the others, that if they knew it, they would no longer be foolish.

This man spends his life without weariness in playing every day for a small stake. Give him each morning the money he can win each day, on condition he does not play; you make him miserable. It will perhaps be said that he seeks the amusement of play and not the winnings. Make him then play for nothing; he will not become excited over it and will feel bored. It is then not the amusement alone that he seeks; a languid and passionless amuse-

ment will weary him. He must get excited over it, and deceive himself by the fancy that he will be happy to win what he would not have as a gift on condition of not playing ; and he must make for himself an object of passion, and excite over it his desire, his anger, his fear, to obtain his imagined end, as children are frightened at the face they have blackened.

Whence comes it that this man, who lost his only son a few months ago, or who this morning was in such trouble through being distressed by lawsuits and quarrels, now no longer thinks of them ? Do not wonder ; he is quite taken up in looking out for the boar which his dogs have been hunting so hotly for the last six hours. He requires nothing more. However full of sadness a man may be, he is happy for the time, if you can prevail upon him to enter into some amusement ; and however happy a man may be, he will soon be discontented and wretched if he be not diverted and occupied by some passion or pursuit which prevents weariness from overcoming him. Without amusement there is no joy ; with amusement there is no sadness. And this also constitutes the happiness of persons in high position, that they have a number of people to amuse them, and have the power to keep themselves in this state.

Consider this. What is it to be suprintendent, chancellor, first president, but to be in a condition wherein from early morning a large number of people come from all quarters to see them, so as not to leave them an hour in the day in which they can think of themselves ? And when they are in-disgrace and sent back to their country houses, where they lack neither wealth nor servants to help them on occasion, they do not fail to be wretched and desolate, because no one prevents them from thinking of themselves.



*Diversion.*—Is not the royal dignity sufficiently great in itself to make its possessor happy by the mere contemplation of what he is? Must he be diverted from this thought like ordinary folk? I see well that a man is made happy by diverting him from the view of his domestic sorrows so as to occupy all his thoughts with the care of dancing well. But will it be the same with a king, and will he be happier in the pursuit of these idle amusements than in the contemplation of his greatness? And what more satisfactory object could be presented to his mind? Would it not be a deprivation of his delight for him to occupy his soul with the thought of how to adjust his steps to the cadence of an air, or of how to throw a [ball] skilfully, instead of leaving it to enjoy quietly the contemplation of the majestic glory which encompasses him? Let us make the trial; let us leave a king all alone to reflect on himself quite at leisure, without any gratification of the senses, without any care in his mind, without society; and we will see that a king without diversion is a man full of wretchedness. So this is carefully avoided, and near the persons of kings there never fail to be a great number of people who see to it that amusement follows business, and who watch all the time of their leisure to supply them with delights and games, so that there is no blank in it. In fact, kings are surrounded with persons who are wonderfully attentive in taking care that the king be not alone and in a state to think of himself, knowing well that he will be miserable, king though he be, if he meditate on self.

In all this I am not talking of Christian kings as Christians, but only as kings.

★ ★ ★

*Diversion.*—Men are entrusted from infancy with the care of their honour, their property, their friends, and even with

the property and the honour of their friends. They are overwhelmed with business, with the study of languages and with physical exercise ; and they are made to understand that they cannot be happy unless their health, their honour, their fortune and that of their friends be in good condition, and that a single thing wanting will make them unhappy. Thus they are given cares and business which make them bustle about from break of day.—It is, you will exclaim, a strange way to make them happy ! What more could be done to make them miserable ?—Indeed ! what could be done ? We should only have to relieve them from all these cares ; for then they would see themselves : they would reflect on what they are, whence they came, whither they go, and thus we cannot employ and divert them too much. And this is why, after having given them so much business, we advise them, if they have some time for relaxation, to employ it in amusement, in play, and to be always fully occupied.

How hollow and full of ribaldry is the heart of man !

★ ★ ★

How does it happen that this man, so distressed at the death of his wife and his only son, or who has some great lawsuit which annoys him, is not at this moment sad, and that he seems so free from all painful and disquieting thoughts ? We need not wonder ; for a ball has been served him, and he must return it to his companion. He is occupied in catching it in its fall from the roof, to win a game. How can he think of his own affairs, pray, when he has this other matter in hand ? Here is a care worthy of occupying this great soul, and taking away from him every other thought of the mind. This man, born to know the universe, to judge all causes, to govern a whole state, is altogether occupied and taken up with the business of catch-

ing a hare. And if he does not lower himself to this, and wants always to be on the strain, he will be more foolish still, because he would raise himself above humanity ; and after all he is only a man, that is to say capable of little and of much, of all and of nothing, he is neither angel nor brute, but man.

★ ★ ★

A mere trifle consoles us, for a mere trifle distresses us.

★ ★ ★

Men spend their time in following a ball or a hare ; it is the pleasure even of kings.

★ ★ ★

Man is obviously made to think. It is his whole dignity and his whole merit ; and his whole duty is to think as he ought. Now, the order of thought is to begin with self, and with its Author and its end.

Now, of what does the world think ? Never of this, but of dancing, playing the lute, singing, making verses, running at the ring, etc., fighting, making oneself king, without thinking what it is to be a king and what to be a man.

★ ★ ★

Thought constitutes the greatness of man.

★ ★ ★

Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in Nature, but he is a thinking reed. The entire universe need not arm itself to rush him. A vapour, a drop of water suffices to kill him.

But, if the universe were to crush him, man would still be more noble than that which killed him, because he knows that he dies and the advantage which the universe has over him, the universe knows nothing of this.

All our dignity consists then in thought. By it we must elevate ourselves, and not by space and time which we cannot fill. Let us endeavour then to think well ; this is the principle of morality

### THE WAGER

*Infinite—nothing* —Our soul is cast into a body, where it finds number, time, dimension Thereupon it reasons, and calls this nature, necessity, and can believe nothing else.

Unity joined to infinity adds nothing to it, no more than one foot to an infinite measure. The finite is annihilated in the presence of the infinite, and becomes a pure nothing. So our spirit before God, so our justice before divine justice. There is not so great a disproportion between our justice and that of God, as between unity and infinity.

The justice of God must be vast like His compassion. Now justice to the outcast is less vast, and ought less to offend our feelings than mercy towards the elect.

We know that there is an infinite, and are ignorant of its nature. As we know it to be false that numbers are finite, it is therefore true that there is an infinity in number But we do not know what it is. It is false that it is even, it is false that it is odd ; for the addition of a unit can make no change in its nature. Yet it is a number, and every number is odd or even (this is certainly true of every finite number). So we may well know that there is a God without knowing what He is. Is there not one substantial truth, seeing there are so many things which are not the truth itself ?

We know then the existence and nature of the finite, because we also are finite and have extension We know the

existence of the infinite, and are ignorant of its nature, because it has extension like us, but not limits like us. But we know neither the existence nor the nature of God, because He has neither extension nor limits.

But by faith we know His existence ; in glory we shall know His nature. Now, I have already shown that we may well know the existence of a thing without knowing its nature

Let us now speak according to natural lights.

If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no affinity to us. We are then incapable of knowing either what He is or if He is. This being so, who will dare to undertake the decision of the question ? Not we, who have no affinity to Him.

Who then will blame Christians for not being able to give a reason for their belief, since they profess a religion for which they cannot give a reason ? They declare, in expounding it to the world, that it is a foolishness, *stultitiam* ; and then you complain that they do not prove it ! If they proved it, they would not keep their word ; it is in lacking proofs, that they are not lacking in sense. " Yes, but although this excuses those who offer it as such, and takes away from them the blame of putting it forward without reason, it does not excuse those who receive it." Let us then examine this point, and say, " God is, or He is not." but to which side shall we incline ? Reason can decide nothing here. There is an infinite chaos which separates us. A game is being played at the extremity of this infinite distance where heads or tails will turn up. What will you wager ? According to reason, you can do neither the one thing nor the other ; according to reason, you can defend neither of the propositions.

Do not then reprove for error those who have made a choice ; for you know nothing about it. " No, but I blame them for having made, not this choice, but a choice ; for

again both he who chooses heads and he who chooses tails are equally at fault, they are both in the wrong. The true course is not to wager at all."

—Yes ; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then ? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least. You have two things to lose, the true and the good ; and two things to stake, your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness ; and your nature has two things to shun, error and misery. Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness ? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all ; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager then without hesitation that He is.—"That is very fine. Yes, I must wager ; but I may perhaps wager too much."—Let us see. Since there is an equal risk of gain and of loss, if you had only to gain two lives, instead of one, you might still wager. But if there were three lives to gain, you would have to play (since you are under the necessity of playing), and you would be imprudent, when you are forced to play, not to chance your life to gain three at a game where there is an equal risk of loss and gain. But there is an eternity of life and happiness. And this being so, if there were an infinity of chances, of which one only would be for you, you would still be right in wagering one to win two, and you would act stupidly, being obliged to play, by refusing to stake one life against three at a game in which out of an infinity of chances there is one for you, if there were an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain. But there is here an infinity of an infinitely happy life to gain, a chance of gain against a finite number of chances of loss, and what you stake is finite. It is all divided ; wherever the infinite is and there is not an infinity of chances of loss against that of gain, there is no time

to hesitate, you must give all. And thus, when one is forced to play, he must renounce reason to preserve his life, rather than risk it for infinite gain, as likely to happen as the loss of nothingness.

For it is no use to say it is uncertain if we will gain, and it is certain that we risk, and that the infinite distance between the *certainty* of what is staked and the *uncertainty* of what will be gained, equals the finite good which is certainly staked against the uncertain infinite. It is not so, as every player stakes a certainty to gain an uncertainty, and yet he stakes a finite certainty to gain a finite uncertainty, without transgressing against reason. There is not an infinite distance between the certainty staked and the uncertainty of the gain ; that is untrue. In truth, there is an infinity between the certainty of gain and the certainty of loss. But the uncertainty of the gain is proportioned to the certainty of the stake according to the proportion of the chances of gain and loss. Hence it comes that, if there are as many risks on one side as on the other, the course is to play even ; and then the certainty of the stake is equal to the uncertainty of the gain, so far is it from fact that there is an infinite distance between them. And so our proposition is of infinite force, when there is the finite to stake in a game where there are equal risks of gain and of loss, and the infinite to gain. This is demonstrable ; and if men are capable of any truths, this is one.

“ I confess it, I admit it. But still is there no means of seeing the faces of the cards ? ”—Yes, Scripture and the rest, etc.—“ Yes, but I have my hands tied and my mouth closed ; I am forced to wager, and am not free. I am not released, and am so made that I cannot believe. What then would you have me do ? ”

True. But at least learn your inability to believe, since reason brings you to this, and yet you cannot believe. Endeavour then to convince yourself, not by increase of

proofs of God, but by the abatement of your passions. You would like to attain faith, and do not know the way ; you would like to cure yourself of unbelief, and ask the remedy for it. Learn of those who have been bound like you, and who now stake all their possessions. These are people who know the way which you would follow, and who are cured of an ill of which you would be cured. Follow the way by which they began ; by acting as if they believe, taking the holy water, having masses said, etc. Even this will naturally make you believe, and deaden your acuteness.—“ But this is what I am afraid of.”—And why ? What have you to lose ?

But to show you that this leads you there, it is this which will lessen the passions, which are your stumbling-blocks.

“ Ah ! This discourse transports me, charms me,” etc.

If this discourse pleases you and seems impressive, know that it is made by a man who has knelt, both before and after it, in prayer to that Being, infinite and without parts, before whom he lays all he has, for you also to lay before Him all you have for your own good and for His glory, that so strength may be given to lowliness.

*The end of his discourse.*—Now what harm will befall you in taking this side ? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, generous, a sincere friend, truthful. Certainly you will not have those poisonous pleasures, glory and luxury ; but will you not have others ? I will tell you that you will thereby gain in this life, and that, at each step you take on this road, you will see so great certainty of gain, so much nothingness in what you risk, that you will at last recognize that you have wagered for something certain and infinite, for which you have given nothing.

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Men blaspheme what they do not know. The Christian religion consists in two points. It is of equal concern to men



to know them, and it is equally dangerous to be ignorant of them. And it is equally of God's mercy that He has given indications of both

And yet they take occasion to conclude that one of these points does not exist, from that which should have caused them to infer the other. The sages who have said there is only one God have been persecuted, the Jews were hated, and still more the Christians. They have seen by the light of Nature that if there be a true religion on earth, the course of all things must tend to it as to a centre.

The whole course of things must have for its object the establishment and the greatness of religion. Men must have within them feelings suited to what religion teaches us. And, finally, religion must so be the object and centre to which all things tend, that whoever knows the principles of religion can give an explanation both of the whole nature of man in particular, and of the whole course of the world in general.

And on this ground they take occasion to revile the Christian religion, because they misunderstand it. They imagine that it consists simply in the worship of a God considered as great, powerful and eternal ; which is strictly deism, almost as far removed from the Christian religion as atheism, which is its exact opposite. And thence they conclude that this religion is not true, because they do not see that all things concur to the establishment of this point, that God does not manifest Himself to men with all the evidence which He could show.'

But let them conclude what they will against deism, they will conclude nothing against the Christian religion, which properly consists in the mystery of the Redeemer, who, uniting in Himself the two natures, human and divine, has redeemed men from the corruption of sin in order to reconcile them in His divine person to God.

The Christian religion then teaches men these two truths :

that there is a God whom men can know, and that there is a corruption in their nature which renders them unworthy of Him. It is equally important to men to know both these points ; and it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness, and to know his own wretchedness without knowing the Redeemer who can free him from it. The knowledge of only one of these points gives rise either to the pride of philosophers, who have known God, and not their own wretchedness, or to the despair of atheists, who know their own wretchedness, but not the Redeemer.

And, as it is alike necessary to man to know these two points, so is it alike merciful of God to have made us know them. The Christian religion does this ; it is in this that it consists.

Let us herein examine the order of the world, and see if all things do not tend to establish these two chief points of this religion : Jesus Christ is the end of all, and the centre to which all tends. Whoever knows Him knows the reason of everything.

Those who fall into error err only through failure to see one of these two things. We can then have an excellent knowledge of God without that of our own wretchedness, and of our own wretchedness without that of God. But we cannot know Jesus Christ without knowing at the same time both God and our own wretchedness.

Therefore I shall not undertake here to prove by natural reasons either the existence of God, or the Trinity ; or the immortality of the soul, or anything of that nature ; not only because I should not feel myself sufficiently able to find in Nature arguments to convince hardened atheists, but also because such knowledge without Jesus Christ is useless and barren. Though a man should be convinced that numerical proportions are immaterial truths, eternal and dependent on a first truth, in which they subsist, and which is called God

I should not think him far advanced towards his own salvation

The God of Christians is not a God who is simply the author of mathematical truths, or of the order of the elements ; that is the view of heathens and Epicureans. He is not merely a God who exercises His providence over the life and fortunes of men, to bestow on those who worship Him a long and happy life. That was the portion of the Jews. But the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of Christians, is a God of love and of comfort, a God who fills the soul and heart of those whom He possesses, a God who makes them conscious of their inward wretchedness and His infinite mercy, who unites Himself to their inmost soul, who fills it with humility and joy, with confidence and love, who renders them incapable of any other end than Himself.

All who seek God without Jesus Christ, and who rest in Nature, either find no light to satisfy them, or come to form for themselves a means of knowing God and serving Him without a mediator. Thereby they fall either into atheism, or into deism, two things which the Christian religion abhors almost equally.

Without Jesus Christ the world would not exist ; for it should needs be either that it would be destroyed or be a hell.

If the world existed to instruct man of God, His divinity would shine through every part in it in an indisputable manner ; but as it exists only by Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ, and to teach men both their corruption and their redemption, all displays the proofs of these two truths.

All appearance indicates neither a total exclusion nor a manifest presence of divinity, but the presence of a God who hides Himself. Everything bears this character.

Shall he alone who knows His nature know it only to be miserable ? Shall he alone who knows it be alone unhappy ?

He must not see nothing at all, nor must he see sufficient

for him to believe he possesses it ; but he must see enough to know that he has lost it. For to know of his loss, he must see and not see , and that is exactly the state in which he naturally is.

Whatever part he takes, I shall not leave him at rest. . . .

★ ★ ★

Whatever may be said, it must be admitted that the Christian religion has something astonishing in it. Some will say, " This is because you were born in it." Far from it ; I stiffen myself against it for this very reason, for fear this prejudice bias me. But although I am born in it, I cannot help finding it so.

★ ★ ★

Misery induces despair, pride induces presumption. The Incarnation shows man the greatness of his misery by the greatness of the remedy which he required.

★ ★ ★

The knowledge of God without that of man's misery causes pride. The knowledge of man's misery without that of God causes despair. The knowledge of Jesus Christ constitutes the middle course, because in Him we find both God and our misery.

★ ★ ★

Jesus Christ is a God whom we approach without pride, and before whom we humble ourselves without despair.

★ ★ ★

The God of the Christians is a God who makes the soul feel that He is her only good, that her only rest is in Him,

that her only delight is in loving Him ; and who makes her at the same time abhor the obstacles which keep her back and prevent her from loving God with all her strength. Self-love and lust, which hinder us, are unbearable to her. Thus God makes her feel that she has this root of self-love which destroys her, and which He alone can cure.

\* \* \*

Jesus Christ did nothing but teach men that they loved themselves, that they were slaves, blind, sick, wretched, and sinners ; that He must deliver them, enlighten, bless and heal them ; that this would be effected by hating self, and by following Him through suffering and the death on the Cross.

Without Jesus Christ man must be in vice and misery ; with Jesus Christ man is free from vice and misery ; in Him is all our virtue and all our happiness. Apart from Him there is but vice, misery, error, darkness, death, despair.

\* \* \*

We know God only by Jesus Christ. Without this mediator all communion with God is taken away ; through Jesus Christ we know God. All those who have claimed to know God, and to prove Him without Jesus Christ, have had only weak proofs. But in proof of Jesus Christ we have the prophecies, which are solid and palpable proofs. And these prophecies, being accomplished and proved true by the event, mark the certainty of these truths, and therefore the divinity of Christ. In Him then, and through Him, we know God. Apart from Him, and without the Scripture, without original sin, without a necessary Mediator promised and come, we cannot absolutely prove God, nor teach right doctrine and right morality. But through Jesus Christ, and

in Jesus Christ, we prove God, and teach morality and doctrine. Jesus Christ is then the true God of men.

But we know at the same time our wretchedness ; for this God is none other than the Saviour of our wretchedness. So we can only know God well by knowing our iniquities.

\* \* \*

*The Mystery of Jesus.*—Jesus suffers in His passion the torments which men inflict upon Him ; but in His agony He suffers the torments which He inflicts on Himself ; *turbare semitipsum*.<sup>1</sup> This is a suffering from no human, but an almighty hand, for He must be almighty to bear it.

— Jesus seeks some comfort at least in His three dearest friends, and they are asleep. He prays them to bear with Him for a little, and they leave Him with entire indifference, having so little compassion that it could not prevent their sleeping even for a moment. And thus Jesus was left alone to the wrath of God.

Jesus is alone on the earth, without anyone not only to feel and share His sufferings, but even to know of them ; He and Heaven were alone in that knowledge.

Jesus is in a garden, not of delight as the first Adam, where he lost himself and the whole human race, but in one of agony, where He saved Himself and the whole human race.

He suffers this affliction and this desertion in the horror of night.

I believe that Jesus never complained but, on this single occasion ; but then He complained as if He could no longer bear His extreme suffering. “ My soul is sorrowful, even unto death.”

Jesus seeks companionship and comfort from men. This is the sole occasion in all His life, as it seems to me. But He receives it not, for His disciples are asleep.

<sup>1</sup> “ And troubled himself.”—JOHN, XI. 33.

Jesus will be in agony even to the end of the world. We must not sleep during that time.

Jesus, in the midst of this universal desertion, including that of His own friends chosen to watch with Him, finding them asleep, is vexed because of the danger to which they expose, not Him, but themselves ; He cautions them for their own safety and their own good, with a sincere tenderness for them during their ingratitude, and warns them that the spirit is willing and the flesh weak.

Jesus, finding them still asleep, without being restrained by any consideration for themselves or for Him, has the kindness not to waken them, and leaves them in repose.

Jesus prays, uncertain of the will of His Father, and fears death ; but, when He knows it, He goes forward to offer Himself to death. *Eamus.*<sup>1</sup> *Processit.*<sup>2</sup>

Jesus asked of men and was not heard.

Jesus, while His disciples slept, wrought their salvation. He has wrought that of each of the righteous while they slept, both in their nothingness before their birth, and in their sins after their birth.

He prays only once that the cup pass away, and then with submission ; and twice that it come if necessary.

Jesus is weary.

Jesus, seeing all His friends asleep and all His enemies wakeful, commits Himself entirely to His Father.

Jesus does not regard in Judas his enmity, but the order of God, which He loves and admits, since He calls him friend.

Jesus tears Himself away from His disciples to enter into His agony ; we must tear ourselves away from our nearest and dearest to imitate Him.

Jesus being in agony and in the greatest affliction, let us pray longer.

<sup>1</sup> " Let us go "—MATTHEW, xxvi 46

<sup>2</sup> " He went forth "—JOHN, xviii 4

We implore the mercy of God, not that He may leave us at peace in our vices, but that He may deliver us from them.

If God gave us masters by His own hand, Oh ! how necessary for us to obey them with a good heart ! Necessity and events follow infallibly.

—" Console thyself, thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not found Me.

" I thought of thee in Mine agony, I have sweated such drops of blood for thee.

" It is tempting Me rather than proving thyself, to think if thou wouldst do such and such a thing on an occasion which has not happened ; I shall act in thee if it occur.

" Let thyself be guided by My rules ; see how well I have led the Virgin and the saints who have let Me act in them.

" The Father loves all that I do.

" Dost thou wish that it always cost Me the blood of My humanity, without thy shedding tears ?

" Thy conversion is My affair ; fear not, and pray with confidence as for Me.

" I am present with thee by My Word in Scripture, by My Spirit in the Church and by inspiration, by My power in the priests, by My prayer in the faithful.

" Physicians will not heal thee, for thou wilt die at last. But it is I who heal thee, and make the body immortal.

" Suffer bodily chains and servitude, I deliver thee at present only from spiritual servitude.

" I am more a friend to thee than such and such an one, for I have done for thee more than they ; they would not have suffered what I have suffered from thee, and they would not have died for thee as I have done in the time of thine infidelities and cruelties, and as I am ready to do, and do, among my elect and at the Holy Sacrament.

" If thou knewest thy sins, thou wouldst lose heart."

—I shall lose it then, Lord, for on Thy assurance I believe their malice.



—“ No, for I, by whom thou learnest, can heal thee of them, and what I say to thee is a sign that I will heal thee. In proportion to thy expiation of them, thou wilt know them, and it will be said to thee : ‘ Behold, thy sins are forgiven thee.’ Repent, then, for thy hidden sins, and for the secret malice of those which thou knowest.”

—Lord, I give Thee all.

—“ I love thee more ardently than thou hast loved thine abominations, *ut immundus pro luto*.<sup>1</sup>

“ To Me be the glory, not to thee, worm of the earth.

“ Ask thy confessor, when My own words are to thee occasion of evil, vanity or curiosity.”

—I see in me depths of pride, curiosity and lust. There is no relation between me and God or Jesus Christ the Righteous. But He has been made sin for me ; all Thy scourges are fallen upon Him. He is more abominable than I, and, far from abhorring me, He holds Himself honoured that I go to Him and succour Him.

But He has healed Himself, and still more so will He heal me.

I must add my wounds to His, and join myself to Him ; and He will save me in saving Himself. But this must not be postponed to the future.

*Eritis sicut dii scientes bonum et malum*.<sup>2</sup> Each one creates his god, when judging “ This is good or bad ” ; and men mourn or rejoice too much at events.

Do little things as though they were great, because of the majesty of Jesus Christ who does them in us, and who lives our life ; and do the greatest things as though they were little and easy, because of His omnipotence.

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It seems to me that Jesus Christ only allowed His wounds

<sup>1</sup> “ As foul with clay ”

<sup>2</sup> “ You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ”—GENESIS, III. 5

to be touched after His resurrection. *Noli me tangere*.<sup>1</sup> We must unite ourselves only to His sufferings.

At the Last Supper He gave Himself in communion as about to die ; to the disciples at Emmaus as risen from the dead , to the whole Church as ascended into heaven.

\* \* \*

“ Compare not thyself with others, but with Me. If thou dost not find Me in those with whom thou comparest thyself, thou comparest thyself to one who is abominable. If thou findest Me in them, compare thyself to Me. But whom wilt thou compare ? Thyself, or Me in thee ? If it is thyself, it is one who is abominable. If it is I, thou comparest Me to Myself. Now I am God in all.

“ I speak to thee, and often counsel thee, because thy director cannot speak to thee, for I do not want thee to lack a guide.

“ And perhaps I do so at his prayers, and thus he leads thee without thy seeing it. Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou didst not possess Me.

“ Be not therefore troubled.”

\* \* \*

The infinite distance between body and mind is a symbol of the infinitely more infinite distance between mind and charity ; for charity is supernatural.

All the glory of greatness has no lustre for people who are in search of understanding.

The greatness of clever men is invisible to kings, to the rich, to chiefs and to all the worldly great.

The greatness of wisdom, which is nothing if not of God, is invisible to the carnal-minded and to the clever. These are three orders differing in kind.

Great geniuses have their power, their glory, their great-

<sup>1</sup> “ Do not touch me.”—JOHN, XX. 17.

ness, their victory, their lustre, and have no need of worldly greatness, with which they are not in keeping. They are seen, not by the eye, but by the mind ; this is sufficient.

The saints have their power, their glory, their victory, their lustre, and need no worldly or intellectual greatness, with which they have no affinity ; for these neither add anything to them, nor take away anything from them. They are seen of God and the angels, and not of the body, nor of the curious mind. God is enough for them.

Archimedes, apart from his rank, would have the same veneration. He fought no battles for the eyes to feast upon ; but he has given his discoveries to all men. Oh ! how brilliant he was to the mind !

Jesus Christ, without riches, and without any external exhibition of knowledge, is in His own order of holiness. He did not invent ; He did not reign. But He was humble, patient, holy, holy to God, terrible to devils, without any sin. Oh ! in what great pomp, and in what wonderful splendour. He is come to the eyes of the heart, which perceive wisdom !

It would have been useless for Archimedes to have acted the prince in his books on geometry, although he was a prince.

It would have been useless for our Lord Jesus Christ to come like a king, in order to shine forth in His Kingdom of holiness. But He came there appropriately in the glory of His own order.

It is most absurd to take offence at the lowliness of Jesus Christ, as if His lowliness were in the same order as the greatness which He came to manifest. If we consider this greatness in His life, in His passion, in His obscurity, in His death, in the choice of His disciples, in their desertion, in His secret resurrection, and the rest, we shall see it to be so immense, that we shall have no reason for being offended at a lowliness which is not of that order.

But there are some who can only admire worldly greatness, as though there were no intellectual greatness ; and others who only admire intellectual greatness, as though there were not infinitely higher things in wisdom.

All bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms, are not equal to the lowest mind ; for mind knows all these and itself ; and these bodies nothing.

All bodies together, and all mind together, and all their products, are not equal to the least feeling of charity This is of an order infinitely more exalted

From all bodies together, we cannot obtain one little thought ; this is impossible, and of another order. From all bodies and minds, we cannot produce a feeling of true charity ; this is impossible, and of another and supernatural order.

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We make an idol of truth itself ; for truth apart from charity is not God, but His image and idol, which we must neither love nor worship ; and still less must we love or worship its opposite, namely, falsehood.

I can easily love total darkness ; but if God keeps me in a state of semi-darkness, such partial darknesss displeases me, and, because I do not see therein the advantage of total darkness, it is unpleasant to me. This is a fault, and a sign that I make for myself an idol of darkness, apart from the order of God. Now only His order must be worshipped.

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Therefore I reject all other religions. In that way I find an answer to all objections. It is right that a God so pure should only reveal Himself to those whose hearts are purified. Hence this religion is lovable to me, and I find it now sufficiently justified by so divine a morality. But I find more in it.

I find it convincing that, since the memory of man has lasted, it was constantly announced to men that they were universally corrupt, but that a Redeemer should come ; that it was not one man who said it, but innumerable men, and a whole nation, expressly made for the purpose, and prophesying for four thousand years. This is a nation which is more ancient than every other nation. Their books, scattered abroad, are four thousand years old.

The more I examine them, the more truths I find in them : an entire nation foretells Him before His advent, and an entire nation worships Him after His advent ; what has preceded and what has followed ; in short, people without idols and kings, this synagogue which was foretold, and these wretches who frequent it, and who, being our enemies, are admirable witnesses of the truth of these prophecies, wherein their wretchedness and even their blindness are foretold.

I find this succession, this religion, wholly divine in its authority, in its duration, in its perpetuity, in its morality, in its conduct, in its doctrine, in its effects. The frightful darkness of the Jews was foretold. *Eris palpens in meridiem*.<sup>1</sup> *Dabitur liber scienti litteras, et dicet : Non possum legere*.<sup>2</sup> While the sceptre was still in the hands of the first foreign usurper, there is the report of the coming of Jesus Christ.

So I hold out my arms to my Redeemer, who, having been foretold for four thousand years, has come to suffer and to die for me on earth, at the time and under all the circumstances foretold. By His grace, I await death in peace, in the hope of being eternally united to Him. Yet I live with joy, whether in the prosperity which it pleases Him to bestow

<sup>1</sup> " And mayest thou grope at midday "—DEUT. XXVIII. 29

<sup>2</sup> " And the vision of all shall be unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which when they shall deliver to one that is learned, they shall say . Read this and he shall answer : I cannot, for it is sealed "—ISAIAH, XXXIX. 11.

upon me, or in the adversity which He sends for my good, and which He has taught me to bear by His example.

\* \* \*

I love poverty because He loved it. I love riches because they afford me the means of helping the very poor. I keep faith with everybody ; I do not render evil to those who wrong me, but I wish them a lot like mine, in which I receive neither evil nor good from men. I try to be just, true, sincere and faithful to all men ; I have a tender heart for those to whom God has more closely united me ; and whether I am alone, or seen of men, I do all my actions in the sight of God, who must judge of them, and to whom I have consecrated them all.

These are my sentiments ; and every day of my life I bless my Redeemer, who has implanted them in me, and who, of a man full of weaknesses, of miseries, of lust, of pride and of ambition, has made a man free from all these evils by the power of His grace, to which all the glory of it is due, as of myself I have only misery and error.

\* \* \*

*Self-love.*—The nature of self-love and of this human Ego is to love self only and consider self only. But what will man do ? He cannot prevent this object that he loves from being full of faults and wants. He wants to be great, and he sees himself small. He wants to be happy, and he sees himself miserable. He wants to be perfect, and he sees himself full of imperfections. He wants to be the object of love and esteem among men, and he sees that his faults merit only their hatred and contempt. This embarrassment in which he finds himself produces in him the most unrighteous and criminal passion that can be imagined ; for he conceives a mortal enmity against the truth which reproves him, and

which convinces him of his faults. He would annihilate it, but, unable to destroy it in its essence, he destroys it as far as possible in his own knowledge and in that of others ; that is to say, he devotes all his attention to hiding his faults both from others and from himself, and he cannot endure either that others should point them out to him, or that they should see them.

Truly it is an evil to be full of faults ; but it is a still greater evil to be full of them, and to be unwilling to recognize them, since that is to add the further fault of a voluntary illusion. We do not like others to deceive us ; we do not think it fair that they should be held in higher esteem by us than they deserve ; it is not then fair that we should deceive them, and should wish them to esteem us more highly than we deserve.

Thus, when they discover only the imperfections and vices which we really have, it is plain they do us no wrong, since it is not they who cause them ; they rather do us good, since they help us to free ourselves from an evil, namely, the ignorance of these imperfections. We ought not to be angry at their knowing our faults and despising us ; it is but right that they should know us for what we are, and should despise us, if we are contemptible.

Such are the feelings that would arise in a heart full of equity and justice. What must we say then of our own heart, when we see in it a wholly different disposition ? For is it not true that we hate truth and those who tell it us, and that we like them to be deceived in our favour, and prefer to be esteemed by them as being other than what we are in fact ? One proof of this makes me shudder. The Catholic religion does not bind us to confess our sins indiscriminately to everybody ; it allows them to remain hidden from all other men save one, to whom she bids us reveal the innermost recesses of our heart, and show ourselves as we are. There is only this one man in the world whom she orders us to un-

deceive, and she binds him to an inviolable secrecy, which makes this knowledge to him as if it were not. Can we imagine anything more charitable and pleasant ? And yet the corruption of man is such that he finds even this law harsh ; and it is one of the main reasons which have caused a great part of Europe to rebel against the Church.

How unjust and unreasonable is the heart of man, which feels it disagreeable to be obliged to do in regard to one man what in some measure it were right to do to all men ! For is it right that we should deceive men ?

There are different degrees in this aversion to truth ; but all may perhaps be said to have it in some degree, because it is inseparable from self-love. It is this false delicacy which makes those who are under the necessity of reproving others choose so many windings and middle courses to avoid offence. They must lessen our faults, appear to excuse them, intersperse praises and evidence of love and esteem. Despite all this, the medicine does not cease to be bitter to self-love. It takes as little as it can, always with disgust, and often with a secret spite against those who administer it.

Hence it happens that if any have some interest in being loved by us, they are averse to render us a service which they know to be disagreeable. They treat us as we wish to be treated. We hate the truth, and they hide it from us. We desire flattery, and they flatter us. We like to be deceived, and they deceive us.

So each degree of good fortune which raises us in the world removes us further from truth, because we are most afraid of wounding those whose affection is most useful and whose dislike is most dangerous. A prince may be the byword of all Europe, and he alone will know nothing of it. I am not astonished ; to tell the truth is useful to whom it is spoken, but disadvantageous to those who tell it, because it makes them disliked. Now those who live with princes love their own interests more than that of the prince whom they



serve ; and so they take care not to confer on him a benefit so as to injure themselves.

This evil is no doubt greater and more common among the higher classes ; but the lower are not exempt from it, since there is always some advantage in making men love us. Human life is thus only a perpetual illusion ; men deceive and flatter each other. No one speaks of us in our presence as he does of us in our absence. Human society is founded on mutual deceit ; few friendships would endure if each knew what his friend said of him in his absence, although he then spoke in sincerity and without passion.

Man is then only disguise, falsehood and hypocrisy, both in himself and in regard to others. He does not wish anyone to tell him the truth ; he avoids telling it to others, and all these dispositions, so removed from justice and reason, have a natural root in his heart.

★ ★ ★

“ All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life ; *libido sentiendi, libido sciendi, libido dominandi.*” Wretched is the cursed land which these three rivers of fire enflame rather than water ! Happy they who, on these rivers, are not overwhelmed or carried away, but are immovably fixed, not standing but seated on a low and secure base, whence they do not rise before the light, but, having rested in peace, stretch out their hands to Him, who must lift them up, and make them stand upright and firm in the porches of the holy Jerusalem ! There pride can no longer assail them nor cast them down ; and yet they weep, not to see all those perishable things swept away by the torrents, but at the remembrance of their loved country, the heavenly Jerusalem, which they remember without ceasing during their prolonged exile.

★ ★ ★

The rivers of Babylon rush and fall and sweep away.

O holy Sion, where all is firm and nothing falls !

We must sit upon the waters, not under them or in them, but on them ; and not standing but seated ; being seated to be humble, and being above them to be secure. But we shall stand in the porches of Jerusalem.

Let us see if this pleasure is stable or transitory ; if it pass away, it is a river of Babylon.

\* \* \*

*The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, pride, etc.*—There are three orders of things : the flesh, the spirit and the will. The carnal are the rich and kings ; they have the body as their object. Inquirers and scientists ; they have the mind as their object. The wise ; they have righteousness as their object.

God must reign over all, and all men must be brought back to Him. In things of the flesh lust reigns specially ; in intellectual matters, inquiry specially ; in wisdom, pride specially. Not that a man cannot boast of wealth or knowledge, but it is not the place for pride ; for in granting to a man that he is learned, it is easy to convince him that he is wrong to be proud. The proper place for pride is in wisdom. for it cannot be granted to a man that he has made himself wise, and that he is wrong to be proud ; for that is right. Now God alone gives wisdom, and that is why *Qui gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur*.<sup>1</sup>

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The three lusts have made three sects ; and the philosophers have done no other thing than follow one of the three lusts.

\* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> " He that glorieth, may glory in the lord "—ST. PAUL, Ad Cor. I. 31.

It is a perverted judgment that makes everyone place himself above the rest of the world and prefer his own good, and the continuance of his own good fortune and life, to that of the rest of the world.

★ ★ ★

Each one is all in all to himself ; for he being dead, all is dead to him. Hence it comes that each believes himself to be all in all to everybody. We must not judge of Nature by ourselves, but by it.

★ ★ ★

It is unjust that men should attach themselves to me, even though they do it with pleasure and voluntarily. I should deceive those in whom I had created this desire ; for I am not the end of any, and I have not the wherewithal to satisfy them. Am I not about to die ? And thus the object of their attachment will die. Therefore, as I would be blameable in causing a falsehood to be believed, though I should employ gentle persuasion, though it should be believed with pleasure, and though it should give me pleasure ; even so I am blameable in making myself loved. And if I attract persons to attach themselves to me, I ought to warn those who are ready to consent to a lie, that they ought not to believe it, whatever advantage comes to me from it ; and likewise that they ought not to attach themselves to me ; or they ought to spend their lives and their care in pleasing God, or in seeking Him.

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I feel that I might not have been ; for the Ego consists in my thoughts. Therefore I, who think, would not have been if my mother had been killed before I had life. I am not then a necessary being. In the same way I am not eternal or

infinite ; but I see plainly that there exists in Nature a necessary Being, eternal and infinite.

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Self-will will never be satisfied, though it should have command of all it would ; but we are satisfied from the moment we renounce it. Without it we cannot be discontented ; with it we cannot be content.

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*The difference between the mathematical and the intuitive mind.*—In the one the principles are palpable, but removed from ordinary use ; so that for want of habit it is difficult to turn one's mind in that direction : but if one turns it thither ever so little, one sees the principles fully, and one must have a quite inaccurate mind who reasons wrongly from principles so plain that it is almost impossible they should escape notice.

But in the intuitive mind the principles are found in common use, and are before the eyes of everybody. One has only to look, and no effort is necessary ; it is only a question of good eyesight, but it must be good, for the principles are so subtle and so numerous that it is almost impossible but that some escape notice. Now the omission of one principle leads to error ; thus one must have very clear sight to see all the principles, and in the next place an accurate mind not to draw false deductions from known principles.

All mathematicians would then be intuitive if they had clear sight, for they do not reason incorrectly from principles known to them ; and intuitive minds would be mathematical if they could turn their eyes to the principles of mathematics to which they are unused.

The reason, therefore, that some intuitive minds are not

mathematical is that they cannot at all turn their attention to the principles of mathematics. But the reason that mathematicians are not intuitive is that they do not see what is before them, and that, accustomed to the exact and plain principles of mathematics, and not reasoning till they have well inspected and arranged their principles, they are lost in matters of intuition where the principles do not allow of such arrangement. They are scarcely seen ; they are felt rather than seen ; there is the greatest difficulty in making them felt by those who do not of themselves perceive them. These principles are so fine and so numerous that a very delicate and, very clear sense is needed to perceive them, and to judge rightly and justly when they are perceived, without for the most part being able to demonstrate them in order as in mathematics ; because the principles are not known to us in the same way, and because it would be an endless matter to undertake it. We must see the matter at once, at one glance, and not by a process of reasoning, at least to a certain degree. And thus it is rare that mathematicians are intuitive, and that men of intuition are mathematicians, because mathematicians wish to treat matters of intuition mathematically, and make themselves ridiculous, wishing to begin with definitions and then with axioms, which is not the way to proceed in this kind of reasoning. Not that the mind does not do so, but it does it tacitly, naturally, and without technical rules ; for the expression of it is beyond all men, and only a few can feel it.

Intuitive minds, on the contrary, being thus accustomed to judge at a single glance, are so astonished when they are presented with propositions of which they understand nothing, and the way to which is through definitions and axioms so sterile, and which they are not accustomed to see thus in detail, that they are repelled and disheartened.

But dull minds are never either intuitive or mathematical.

Mathematicians who are only mathematicians have exact

minds, provided all things are explained to them by means of definitions and axioms ; otherwise they are inaccurate and insufferable, for they are only right when the principles are quite clear.

And men of intuition who are only intuitive cannot have the patience to reach to first principles of things speculative and conceptual, which they have never seen in the world, and which are altogether out of the common.

\* \* \*

There are different kinds of right understanding ; some have right understanding in a certain order of things, and not in others, where they go astray. Some draw conclusions well from a few premises, and thus displays an acute judgment.

Others draw conclusions well where there are many premises.

For example, the former easily learn hydrostatics, where the premises are few, but the conclusions are so fine that only the greatest acuteness can reach them.

And in spite of that, these persons would perhaps not be great mathematicians, because mathematics contain a great number of premises, and there is perhaps a kind of intellect that can search with ease a few premises to the bottom : and cannot in the least penetrate those matters in which there are many premises.

There are then two kinds of intellect : the one able to penetrate acutely and deeply into the conclusions of given premises, and this is the precise intellect ; the other able to comprehend a great number of premises without confusing them, and this is the mathematical intellect. The one has force and exactness, the other comprehension. Now the one quality can exist without the other ; the intellect can be strong and narrow, and can also be comprehensive and weak.

\* \* \*

Those who are accustomed to judge by feeling do not understand the process of reasoning, for they would understand at first sight, and are not used to seek for principles. And others, on the contrary, who are accustomed to reason from principles, do not at all understand matters of feeling, seeking principles, and being unable to see at a glance.

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*Mathematics, Intuition.*—True eloquence makes light of eloquence, true morality makes light of morality ; that is to say, the morality of the judgment, which has no rules, makes light of the morality of the intellect.

For it is to judgment that perception belongs, as science belongs to intellect. Intuition is the part of judgment, mathematics of intellect.

To make light of philosophy is to be a true philosopher.

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Those who judge of a work by rule are in regard to others as those who have a watch are in regard to others. One says, "It is two hours ago ;" the other says, "It is only three-quarters of an hour." I look at my watch, and say to the one, "You are weary," and to the other, "Time gallops with you" ; for it is only an hour and a half ago, and I laugh at those who tell me that time goes slowly with me, and that I judge by imagination. They do not know that I judge by my watch.

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Just as we harm the understanding, we harm the feelings also.

The understanding and the feelings are moulded by intercourse ; the understanding and feelings are corrupted by intercourse. Thus good or bad society improves or corrupts

them. It is, then, all-important to know how to choose in order to improve and not to corrupt them ; and we cannot make this choice, if they be not already improved and not corrupted. Thus a circle is formed, and those are fortunate who escape it.

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The greater intellect one has, the more originality one finds in men. Ordinary persons find no difference between men.

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Some vices only lay hold of us by means of others, and these, like branches, fall on removal of the trunk.

★ ★ ★

When we wish to correct with advantage, and to show another that he errs, we must notice from what side he views the matter, for on that side it is usually true, and admit that truth to him, but reveal to him the side on which it is false. He is satisfied with that, for he sees that he was not mistaken, and that he only failed to see all sides. Now, no one is offended at not seeing everything ; but one does not like to be mistaken; and that perhaps arises from the fact that man naturally cannot see everything, and that naturally he cannot err in the side he looks at, since the perceptions of our senses are always true.

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People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have themselves discovered than by those which have come into the mind of others.

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All great amusements are dangerous to the Christian life ; but among all those which the world has invented there is



none more to be feared than the theatre. It is a representation of the passions so natural and so delicate that it excites them and gives birth to them in our hearts, and, above all, to that of love, principally when it is represented as very chaste and virtuous. For the more innocent it appears to innocent souls, the more they are likely to be touched by it. Its violence pleases our self-love, which immediately forms a desire to produce the same effects which are seen so well represented ; and, at the same time, we make ourselves a conscience founded on the propriety of the feelings which we see there, by which the fear of pure souls is removed, since they imagine that it cannot hurt their purity to love with a love which seems to them so reasonable.

So we depart from the theatre with our hearts so filled with all the beauty and tenderness of love, the soul and the mind so persuaded of its innocence, that we are quite ready to receive its first impressions, or rather to seek an opportunity of awakening them in the heart of another, in order that we may receive the same pleasures and the same sacrifices which we have seen so well represented in the theatre.

## PROVINCIAL LETTERS

### FOURTH LETTER

SIR—Nothing can come up to the Jesuits I have seen Jacobins, doctors, and all sorts of people in my day, but such an interview as I have just had was wanting to complete my knowledge of mankind. Other men are merely copies of them. As things are always found best at the fountainhead, I paid a visit to one of the ablest among them, in company with my trusty Jansenist—the same who accompanied me to the Dominicans. Being particularly anxious to learn something of a dispute which they have with the Jansenists about what they call *actual grace*, I said to the worthy father that I would be much obliged to him if he would instruct me on this point—that I did not even know what the term meant, and would thank him to explain it. “With all my heart,” the Jesuit replied; “for I dearly love inquisitive people. Actual grace, according to our definition, ‘is an inspiration of God, whereby He makes us to know His will, and excites within us a desire to perform it.’”

“And where,” said I, “lies your difference with the Jansenists on this subject?”

“The difference lies here,” he replied; “we hold that God bestows actual grace on *all men in every case of temptation*; for we maintain, that unless a person have, whenever tempted, actual grace to keep him from sinning, his sin, whatever it may be, can never be imputed to him. The

Jansenists, on the other hand, affirm that sins, though committed without actual grace, are, nevertheless, imputed ; but they are a pack of fools." I got a glimpse of his meaning ; but, to obtain from him a fuller explanation, I observed : " My dear father, it is that phrase *actual grace* that puzzles me ; I am quite a stranger to it, and if you would have the goodness to tell me the same thing over again, without employing that term, you would infinitely oblige me."

" Very good," returned the father ; " that is to say, you want me to substitute the definition in place of the thing defined ; that makes no alteration of the sense ; I have no objections. We maintain it, then, as an undeniable principle, *that an action cannot be imputed as a sin, unless God bestow on us, before committing it, the knowledge of the evil that is in the action, and an inspiration inciting us to avoid it.* Do you understand me now ? "

Astonished at such a declaration, according to which, no sins of surprise, nor any of those committed in entire forgetfulness of God, could be imputed, I turned round to my friend the Jansenist, and easily discovered from his looks that he was of a different way of thinking. But as he did not utter a word, I said to the monk, " I would fain wish, my dear father, to think that what you have now said is true, and that you have good proofs for it."

" Proofs, say you ! " he instantly exclaimed. " I shall furnish you with these very soon, and the very best sort too ; let me alone for that."

So saying, he went in search of his books, and I took this opportunity of asking my friend if there was any other person who talked in this manner ? " Is this so strange to you ? " he replied. " You may depend upon it that neither the fathers, nor the popes, nor councils, nor Scripture, nor any book of devotion, employ such language ; but if you wish casuists and modern schoolmen, he will bring you a goodly number of them on his side." " O ! but I care

not a fig about these authors, if they are contrary to tradition," I said. "You are right," he replied.

As he spoke, the good father entered the room, laden with books ; and presenting to me the first that came to hand, "Read that," he said ; "this is *The Summary of Sins*, by Father Bauny—the fifth edition, too, you see, which shows that it is a good book."

"It is a pity, however," whispered the Jansenist in my ear, "that this same book has been condemned at Rome, and by the bishops of France."

"Look at page 906," said the father. I did so, and read as follows : "In order to sin and become culpable in the sight of God, it is necessary to know that the thing we wish to do is not good, or at least to doubt that it is—to fear or to judge that God takes no pleasure in the action which we contemplate, but forbids it ; and in spite of this, to commit the deed, leap the fence, and transgress."

"This is a good commencement," I remarked. "And yet," said he, "mark how far envy will carry some people. It was on that very passage that M. Hallier, before he became one of our friends, bantered Father Bauny, by applying to him these words : *Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*—'Behold the man that taketh away the sins of the world !'"

"Certainly," said I, "according to Father Bauny, we may be said to behold a redemption of an entirely new description."

"Would you have a more authentic witness on the point ?" added he. "Here is the book of Father Annat. It is the last that he wrote against M. Arnauld. Turn up to page 34, where there is a dog's ear, and read the lines which I have marked with pencil—they ought to be written in letters of gold." I then read these words : "He that has no thought of God, nor of his sins, nor any apprehension (that is, as he explained it, any knowledge) of his obligation to exercise the acts of love to God or contrition, has no actual grace

for exercising those acts ; but it is equally true that he is guilty of no sin in omitting them, and that, if he is damned, it will not be as a punishment for that omission." And a few lines below, he adds : " The same thing may be said of a culpable commission."

" You see," said the monk, " how he speaks of sins of *omission* and of *commission*. Nothing escapes him. What say you to that ? "

" Say ! " I exclaimed. " I am delighted ! What a charming train of consequences do I discover flowing from this doctrine ! I can see the whole results already ; and such mysteries present themselves before me ! Why, I see more people, beyond all comparison, justified by this ignorance and forgetfulness of God, than by grace and the sacraments ! But, my dear father, are you not inspiring me with a delusive joy ? Are you sure there is nothing here like that *sufficiency which suffices not* ? I am terribly afraid of the *Distinguo*—I was taken in with that once already ! Are you quite in earnest ? "

" How now ! " cried the monk, beginning to get angry ; " here is no matter for jesting. I assure you there is no such thing as equivocation here."

" I am not making a jest of it," said I ; " but that is what I really dread, from pure anxiety to find it true."

" Well then," he said, " to assure yourself still more of it, here are the writings of M. le Moine, who taught the doctrine in a full meeting of the Sorbonne. He learned it from us, to be sure ; but he has the merit of having cleared it up most admirably. O how circumstantially he goes to work ! He shows that, in order to make out an action to be a *sin*, all these things must have passed through the mind. Read and weigh every word."—I then read what I now give you in a translation from the original Latin : " 1. On the one hand, God sheds abroad on the soul some measure of love, which gives it a bias toward the thing commanded ; and on

the other, a rebellious concupiscence solicits it in the opposite direction. 2. God inspires the soul with a knowledge of its own weakness. 3. God reveals the knowledge of the physician who can heal it. 4. God inspires it with a desire to be healed. 5. God inspires a desire to pray and solicit His assistance."

"And unless all these things occur and pass through the soul," added the monk, "the action is not properly a sin, and cannot be imputed, as M. le Moine shows in the same place and in what follows. Would you wish to have other authorities for this? Here they are."

"All modern ones, however," whispered my Jansenist friend.

"So I perceive," said I to him aside; and then, turning to the monk: "O my dear sir," cried I, "what a blessing this will be to some persons of my acquaintance! I must positively introduce them to you. You have never, perhaps, met with people who had fewer sins to account for all your life. For, in the first place, they never think of God at all; their vices have got the better of their reason; they have never known either their weakness or the physician who can cure it; they have never thought of 'desiring the health of their soul,' and still less of 'praying to God to bestow it'; so that, according to M. le Moine, they are still in the state of baptismal innocence. They have 'never had a thought of loving God or of being contrite for their sins'; so that, according to Father Annat, they have never committed sin through the want of charity and penitence. Their life is spent in a perpetual round of all sorts of pleasures, in the course of which they have not been interrupted by the slightest remorse. These excesses had led me to imagine that their perdition was inevitable; but you, father, inform me that these same excesses secure their salvation. Blessings on you, my good father, for this way of justifying people! Others prescribe painful austerities for healing the soul; but you

show that souls which may be thought desperately dis-tempered are in quite good health. What an excellent device for being happy both in this world and in the next ! I had always supposed that the less a man thought of God, the more he sinned ; but, from what I see now, if one could only succeed in bringing himself not to think upon God at all, everything would be pure with him in all time coming. Away with your half-and-half sinners, who retain some sneaking affection for virtue ! They will be damned every one of them, these semi-sinners. But commend me to your arrant sinners—hardened, unalloyed, out-and-out, thoroughbred sinners. Hell is no place for them ; they have cheated the devil, purely by virtue of their devotion to his service ! ”

The good father, who saw very well the connection between these consequences and his principle, dexterously evaded them ; and maintaining his temper, either from good nature or policy, he merely replied : “ To let you understand how we avoid these inconveniences, you must know that, while we affirm that these reprobates to whom you refer would be without sin if they had no thoughts of conversion and no desires to devote themselves to God, we maintain that they all actually *have* such thoughts and desires, and that God never permitted a man to sin without giving him previously a view of the evil which he contemplated, and a desire, either to avoid the offence, or at all events to implore His aid to enable him to avoid it ; and none but Jansenists will assert the contrary.”

“ Strange ! father,” returned I ; “ is this, then, the heresy of the Jansenists, to deny that every time a man commits a sin, he is troubled with a remorse of conscience, in spite of which, he ‘ leaps the fence and transgresses,’ as Father Bauny has it ? It is rather too good a joke to be made a heretic for that. I can easily believe that a man may be damned for not having good thoughts ; but it never would have entered my head to imagine that any man could be subjected to that

doom for not believing that all mankind must have good thoughts ! But, father, I hold myself bound in conscience to disabuse you, and to inform you that there are thousands of people who have no such desires—who sin without regret—who sin with delight—who make a boast of sinning. And who ought to know better about these things than yourself ? You cannot have failed to have confessed some of those to whom I allude ; for it is among persons of high rank that they are most generally to be met with. But mark, father, the dangerous consequences of your maxim. Do you not perceive what effect it may have on those libertines who like nothing better than to find out matter of doubt in religion ? What a handle do you give them, when you assure them, as an article of faith, that on every occasion when they commit a sin, they feel an inward presentiment of the evil and a desire to avoid it. Is it not obvious that, feeling convinced by their own experience of the falsity of your doctrine on this point, which you say is a matter of faith, they will extend the inference drawn from this to all the other points ? They will argue that, since you are not trustworthy in one article, you are to be suspected in them all ; and thus you shut them up to conclude, either that religion is false, or that you must know very little about it.”

Here my friend the Jansenist, following up my remarks, said to him : “ You would do well, father, if you wish to preserve your doctrine, not to explain so precisely as you have done to us, what you mean by *actual grace*. For how could you, without forfeiting all credit in the estimation of men, openly declare that *nobody sins without having previously the knowledge of his weakness, and of a physician, or the desire of a cure, and of asking it of God ?* Will it be believed, on your word, that those who are immersed in avarice, impurity, blasphemy, duelling, revenge, robbery and sacrilege, have really a desire to embrace chastity, humility and the other Christian virtues ? Can it be conceived that those philo-



sophers who boasted so loudly of the powers of Nature, knew its infirmity and its physician? Will you maintain that those who held it as a settled maxim that 'it is not God that bestows virtue, and that no one ever asked it from him' would think of asking it for themselves? Who can believe that the Epicureans, who denied a divine providence, ever felt any inclination to pray to God?—men who said that 'it would be an insult to invoke the Deity in our necessities, as if he were capable of wasting a thought on beings like us?' In a word, how can it be imagined that idolators and Atheists, every time they are tempted to the commission of sin, in other words, infinitely often during their lives, have a desire to pray to the true God, of whom they are ignorant, that he would bestow on them virtues of which they have no conception?"

"Yes," said the worthy monk, in a resolute tone, "we will affirm it: and sooner than allow that anyone sins without having the consciousness that he is doing evil, and the desire of the opposite virtue, we will maintain that the whole world, reprobates and infidels included, have these inspirations and desires in every case of temptation. You cannot show me, from the Scripture at least, that this is not the truth."

On this remark, I struck in by exclaiming: "What! father, must we have recourse to the Scripture to demonstrate a thing so clear as this? This is not a point of faith, nor even of reason. It is a matter of fact: we see it—we know it—we feel it."

But the Jansenist, keeping the monk to his own terms, addressed him as follows: "If you are willing, father, to stand or fall by Scripture, I am ready to meet you there; only you must promise to yield to its authority; and since it is written that 'God has not revealed His judgments to the Heathen, but left them to wander in their own ways,' you must not say that God has enlightened those whom the

Sacred Writings assure us 'he has left in darkness and in the shadow of death.' Is it not enough to show the erroneousness of your principle, to find that St. Paul calls himself 'the chief of sinners,' for a sin which he committed 'ignorantly, and with zeal?' Is it not enough to see, from the Gospel, that those who crucified Jesus Christ had need of the pardon which He asked for them, although they knew not the malice of their action, and would never have committed it, according to St. Paul, if they had known it? Is it not enough that Jesus Christ apprises us that there will be persecutors of the Church, who, while making every effort to ruin her, will 'think that they are doing God service;' teaching us that this sin, which in the judgment of the apostle, is the greatest of all sins, may be committed by persons who, so far from knowing that they were sinning, would think that they sinned by not committing it? In fine, is it not enough that Jesus Christ Himself has taught us that there are two kinds of sinners, the one of whom sin with 'knowledge of their Master's will,' and the other without knowledge; and that both of them will be 'chastised,' although, indeed, in a different manner?"

Sorely pressed by so many testimonies from Scripture, to which he had appealed, the worthy monk began to give way; and, leaving the wicked to sin without inspiration, he said: "You will not deny that *good men*, at least, never sin unless God give them"—"You are flinching," said I, interrupting him; "you are flinching now, my good father; you abandon the general principle, and finding that it will not hold in regard to the wicked, you would compound the matter, by making it apply at least to the righteous. But in this point of view the application of it is, I conceive, so circumscribed, that it will hardly apply to anybody, and it is scarcely worth while to dispute the point."

My friend, however, who was so ready on the whole question, that I am inclined to think he had studied it all that

very morning, replied : " This, father, is the last entrenchment to which those of your party who are willing to reason at all are sure to retreat ; but you are far from being safe even here. The example of the saints is not a whit more in your favour. Who doubts that they often fall into sins of surprise, without being conscious of them ? Do we not learn from the saints themselves how often concupiscence lays hidden snares for them ; and how generally it happens, as St Augustine complains of himself in his Confessions, that, with all their discretion, they ' give to pleasure what they mean only to give to necessity ?'

" How usual is it to see the more zealous friends of truth betrayed by the heat of controversy into sallies of bitter passion for their personal interests, while their consciences, at the time, bear them no other testimony than that they are acting in this manner purely for the interests of truth, and they do not discover their mistake till long afterwards !

" What, again, shall we say of those who, as we learn from examples in ecclesiastical history, eagerly involve themselves in affairs which are really bad, because they believe them to be really good ; and yet this does not hinder the fathers from condemning such persons as having sinned on these occasions ?

" And were this not the case, how could the saints have their secret faults ? How could it be true that God alone knows the magnitude and the number of our offences ; that no one knows whether he is worthy of hatred or love ; and that the best of saints, though unconscious of any culpability, ought always, as St. Paul says of himself, to remain in ' fear and trembling ' ?

" You perceive, then, father, that this knowledge of the evil, and love of the opposite virtue, which you imagine to be essential to constitute sin, are equally disproved by the examples of the righteous and of the wicked. In the case of

the wicked, their passion for vice sufficiently testifies that they have no desire for virtue, and in regard to the righteous, the love which they bear to virtue plainly shows that they are not always conscious of those sins which, as the Scripture teaches, they are daily committing.

"So true is it, indeed, that the righteous often sin through ignorance, that the greatest saints rarely sin otherwise. For how can it be supposed that souls so pure, who avoid with so much care and zeal the least things that can be displeasing to God as soon as they discover them, and who yet sin many times every day, could possibly have, every time before they fell into sin, 'the knowledge of their infirmity on that occasion, and of their physician, and the desire of their souls' health, and of praying to God for assistance,' and that, in spite of these inspirations, these devoted souls 'nevertheless transgress,' and commit the sin?

"You must conclude then, father, that neither sinners nor yet saints have always that knowledge, or those desires and inspirations every time they offend; that is, to use your own terms, they have not always actual grace. Say no longer, with your modern authors, that it is impossible for those to sin who do not know righteousness; but rather join with St. Augustine and the ancient fathers in saying that it is impossible *not* to sin, when we do not know righteousness: *Necesse est ut peccet, a quo ignoratur justitia.*"

The good father, though thus driven from both of his positions, did not lose courage, but after ruminating a little, "Ha!" he exclaimed, "I shall convince you immediately." And again taking up Father Bauny, he pointed to the same place he had before quoted, exclaiming, "Look now—see the ground on which he establishes his opinion! I was sure he would not be deficient in good proofs. Read what he quotes from Aristotle, and you will see that after so express an authority, you must either burn the books of this prince

of philosophers or adopt our opinion. Hear, then, the principles which support Father Bauny : Aristotle states first, 'that an action cannot be imputed as blameworthy, if it be involuntary.'

"I grant that," said my friend.

"This is the first time you have agreed together," said I. "Take my advice, father, and proceed no further."

"That would be doing nothing," he replied ; "we must know what are the conditions necessary to constitute an action voluntary."

"I am much afraid," returned I, "that you will get at loggerheads on that point."

"No fear of that," said he ; "this is sure ground—Aristotle is on my side. Hear, now, what Father Bauny says : 'In order that an action be voluntary, it must proceed from a man who perceives, knows and comprehends what is good and what is evil in it. *Voluntarium est*—that is a voluntary action, as we commonly say with the philosopher' (that is Aristotle, you know, said the monk, squeezing my hand) ; '*quod fit a principio cognoscente singula in quibus est actio*—which is done by a person knowing the particulars of the action ; so that when the will is led inconsiderately, and without mature reflection, to embrace or reject, to do or omit to do anything, before the understanding has been able to see whether it would be right or wrong, such an action is neither good nor evil ; because previous to this mental inquisition, view and reflection on the good or bad qualities of the matter in question, the act by which it is done is not voluntary.' Are you satisfied now ?" said the father.

"It appears," returned I, "that Aristotle agrees with Father Bauny ; but that does not prevent me from feeling surprised at this statement. What, sir ! is it not enough to make an action voluntary that the man knows what he is doing, and does it just because he chooses to do it ? Must we

suppose, besides this, that he 'perceives, knows and comprehends what is good and evil in action?' Why, on this supposition there would be hardly such a thing in Nature as voluntary actions, for no one scarcely thinks about all this. How many oaths in gambling—how many excesses in debauchery—how many riotous extravagances in the carnival must, on this principle, be excluded from the list of voluntary actions, and consequently neither good nor bad, because not accompanied by those 'mental reflections on the good and evil qualities' of the action? But is it possible, father, that Aristotle held such a sentiment? I have always understood that he was a sensible man."

"I shall soon convince you of that," said the Jansenist; and requesting a sight of Aristotle's *Ethics*, he opened it at the beginning of the third book, from which Father Bauny had taken the passage quoted, and said to the monk: "I excuse you, my dear sir, for having believed, on the word of Father Bauny, that Aristotle held such a sentiment; but you would have changed your mind had you read him for yourself. It is true that he teaches, that 'in order to make an action voluntary, we must know the particulars of that action'—*singula in quibus est actio*. But what else does he mean by that than the *particular circumstances* of the action? The examples which he adduces clearly show this to be his meaning, for they are exclusively confined to cases in which the persons were ignorant of some of the circumstances; such as that of 'a person who, wishing to exhibit a machine, discharges a dart which wounds a bystander; and that of Merope, who killed her own son instead of her enemy,' and such like.

"Thus you see what is the kind of ignorance that renders actions involuntary; namely, that of the particular circumstances, which is termed by divines, as you must know, *ignorance of the fact*. But with respect to *ignorance of the right*—ignorance of the good or evil in an action—which is the only point in question, let us see if Aristotle agrees with Father

Bauny. Here are the words of the philosopher : ' All wicked men are ignorant of what they ought to do, and what they ought to avoid ; and it is this very ignorance which makes them wicked and vicious. Accordingly, a man cannot be said to act involuntarily merely because he is ignorant of what it is proper for him to do in order to fulfil his duty. This ignorance in the choice of good and evil does not make the action involuntary ; it only makes it vicious. The same thing may be affirmed of the man who is ignorant generally of the rules of his duty ; such ignorance is worthy of blame, not of excuse. And consequently, the ignorance which renders actions involuntary and excusable is simply that which relates to the fact and its particular circumstances. In this case the person is excused and forgiven, being considered as having acted contrary to his inclination.'

" After this, father, will you maintain that Aristotle is of your opinion ? And who can help being astonished to find that a Pagan philosopher had more enlightened views than your doctors in a matter so deeply affecting morals, and the direction of conscience, too, as the knowledge of those conditions which render actions voluntary or involuntary, and which, accordingly, charge or discharge them as sinful ? Look for no more support, then, father, from the prince of philosophers, and no longer oppose yourselves to the prince of theologians, who has thus decided the point in the first book of his *Retractions*, chapter xv : ' Those who sin through ignorance, though they sin without meaning to sin, commit the deed only because they *will* commit it. And, therefore, even this sin of ignorance cannot be committed except by the will of him who commits it, though by a will which incites him to the action merely, and not to the sin ; and yet the action itself is nevertheless sinful, for it is enough to constitute it such that he has done what he was bound not to do.' "

The Jesuit seemed to be confounded more with the passage from Aristotle, I thought, than that from St. Augustine ; but while he was thinking on what he could reply, a messenger came to inform him that Madame la Mareschale of —, and Madame the Marchioness of —, requested his attendance. So taking a hasty leave of us, he said : “ I shall speak about it to our fathers. They will find an answer to it, I warrant you ; we have got some long heads among us.”

We understood him perfectly well ; and on our being left alone, I expressed to my friend my astonishment at the subversion which this doctrine threatened to the whole system of morals. To this he replied that he was quite astonished at my astonishment. “ Are you not yet aware,” he said, “ that they have gone to far greater excess in morals than in any other matter ? ” He gave me some strange illustrations of this, promising me more at some future time. The information which I may receive on this point, will, I hope, furnish the topic of my next communication—I am, etc.

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#### ELEVENTH LETTER

SIR—. . . I shall tell you the marks which the fathers of the Church have given for judging when our animadversions flow from a principle of piety and charity, and when from a spirit of malice and impiety.

The first of these rules is, that the spirit of piety always prompts us to speak with sincerity and truthfulness ; whereas malice and envy make use of falsehood and calumny. “ *Splendientia et vehementia, sed rebus veris*—Splendid and vehement in words, but true in things,” as St. Augustine says. The dealer in falsehood is an agent of the devil. No direction of the intention can sanctify slander ; and though the con-



version of the whole earth should depend on it, no man may warrantably calumniate the innocent : because none may do the least evil, in order to accomplish the greatest good ; and, as the Scripture says, " the truth of God stands in no need of our lie." St. Hilary observes, that " it is the bounden duty of the advocates of truth to advance nothing in its support but true things." Now, fathers, I can declare before God that there is nothing that I detest more than the slightest possible deviation from the truth, and that I have ever taken the greatest care, not only not to falsify (which would be horrible), but not to alter or wrest, in the slightest possible degree, the sense of a single passage. So closely have I adhered to this rule, that if I may presume to apply them to the present case, I may safely say, in the words of the same St. Hilary : " If we advance things that are false, let our statements be branded with infamy ; but if we can show that they are public and notorious, it is no breach of apostolic modesty or liberty to expose them."

It is not enough, however, to tell nothing but the truth ; we must not always tell everything that is true ; we should publish only those things which it is useful to disclose, and not those which can only hurt, without doing any good. And, therefore, as the first rule is to speak with truth, the second is to speak with discretion. " The wicked," says St. Augustine, " in persecuting the good, blindly follow the dictates of their passion ; but the good, in their persecution of the wicked, are guided by a wise discretion, even as the surgeon warily considers where he is cutting, while the murderer cares not where he strikes." You must be sensible, fathers, that in selecting from the maxims of your authors, I have refrained from quoting those which would have galled you most, though I might have done it, and that without sinning against discretion, as others who were both learned and catholic writers have done before me. All who have read your authors know how far I have spared you in this

respect. Besides, I have taken no notice whatever of what might be brought against individual characters among you ; and I would have been extremely sorry to have said a word about secret and personal failings, whatever evidence I might have of them, being persuaded that this is the distinguishing property of malice, and a practice which ought never to be resorted to, unless where it is urgently demanded for the good of the Church. It is obvious, therefore, that in what I have been compelled to advance against your moral maxims I have been by no means wanting in due consideration : and that you have more reason to congratulate yourself on my moderation than to complain of my indiscretion.

The third rule, fathers, is : That when there is need to employ a little raillery, the spirit of piety will take care to employ it against error only, and not against things holy ; whereas the spirit of buffoonery, impiety and heresy mocks at all that is most sacred. I have already vindicated myself on that score ; and indeed there is no great danger of falling into that vice so long as I confine my remarks to the opinions which I have quoted from your authors.

In short, fathers, to abridge these rules, I shall only mention another, which is the essence and the end of all the rest : That the spirit of charity prompts us to cherish in the heart a desire for the salvation of those against whom we dispute, and to address our prayers to God while we direct our accusations to men. "We ought never," says St. Augustine, "to preserve charity in the heart, even while we are obliged to pursue a line of external conduct which to man has the appearance of harshness ; we ought to smite them with a sharpness, severe but kindly, remembering that their advantage is more to be studied than their gratification." I am sure, fathers, that there is nothing in my letters, from which it can be inferred that I have not cherished such a desire towards you ; and as you can find nothing to the contrary in

them, charity obliges you to believe that I have been really actuated by it. It appears, then, that you cannot prove that I have offended against this rule, or against any of the other rules which charity inculcates ; and you have no right to say, therefore, that I have violated it.

## THOUGHTS ON DEATH<sup>1</sup>

When we are in affliction because of the death of some person for whom we had a great affection, or for some other misfortune which befalls us, we should seek consolation in our ills, not in ourselves, not in men, not in anything that is created ; but in God. And the reason is, that all creatures are not the first cause of the accidents that we call evils ; but that the providence of God being the only and veritable cause, the arbiter and the sovereign of them, it is indubitable that we must resort directly to the source, and go back to the origin to find a solid alleviation. If we follow this precept, and if we regard this event, not as an effect of chance, not as a fatal necessity of Nature, not as the play of the elements and parts of which man is composed (for God has not abandoned His elect to caprice and chance), but as a result indispensable, inevitable, just, holy, useful to the good of the Church, and to the exaltation of the name and the greatness of God, of a decree of His providence conceived from all eternity to be executed in the plenitude of its time in such a year, such a day, such an hour, such a place, such a manner ; and, in short, that all that has happened has been from all time fore-known and fore-ordained of God ; if, I say, through a transport of grace, we regard this accident, not in itself and apart from God, but apart from itself, and in the inmost part of the will of God, in the justice of His decree, in the order of His

<sup>1</sup> From a letter written 17th October 1651 to M and Mme Perier, after the death of Pascal's father.

providence, which is the true cause of it, without which it would not have happened, through which alone it has happened, and in the manner in which it has happened ; we shall adore in humble silence the impenetrable loftiness of His secrets, we shall venerate the sanctity of His decrees, we shall bless the acts of His providence, and, uniting our will to that of God Himself, we shall wish with Him, in Him, and for Him, the thing that He has willed in us and for us from all eternity.

. . . There is no consolation except in truth alone. It is certain that Socrates and Seneca have nothing consolatory on such an occasion as this. They have been in the error that has blinded all men in the beginning : they have all taken death as natural to man ; and all the discourses which they have founded upon this false principle are so futile that they only serve to demonstrate by their inutility how weak man is in general, since the most elevated productions of the greatest among men are so weak and puerile. It is not the same with Jesus Christ, it is not thus in the canonical books ; the truth is there revealed, and consolation is also as infallibly joined with it as it is infallibly separated from error.

Let us, then, consider death in the truth which the Holy Spirit has taught us. We have this admirable advantage, of knowing that death is really and actually a penalty of sin imposed on man in order to expiate his crime, necessary to man to purge him from sin ; that it is the only one that can deliver the soul from the concupiscence of the members, without which saints come not into the world. We know that life, and the life of Christians, is a continual sacrifice, that can only be completed by death ; we know that as Jesus Christ, being in the world, regarded and offered Himself to God as a sacrifice, and a veritable victim ; as His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His presence in the Eucharist, and His eternal seat at the right hand, are only a sole and single sacrifice ; we know that what has

been accomplished in Jesus Christ should be accomplished also in all His members.

Let us, then, consider life as a sacrifice ; and let the accidents of life make no impression upon the minds of Christians, except in proportion as they interrupt or accomplish this sacrifice. Let us only call that evil which renders the victim of God the victim of the devil, but let us call that good which renders the victim of the devil in Adam the victim of God ; and by this rule let us examine the nature of death.

For this consideration it is necessary to have recourse to the person of Jesus Christ, for all that is in men is abominable, and as God looks upon men only through the mediator Jesus Christ, men should also look neither upon others nor themselves except mediately through Jesus Christ. For if we do not take this course, we shall find in ourselves nothing but veritable misfortunes, or abominable pleasures ; but if we regard all things in Jesus Christ, we shall find full consolation, full satisfaction, and full edification.

Let us, then, consider death in Jesus Christ, and not without Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ it is horrible, detestable, the horror of Nature. In Jesus Christ it is altogether different ; it is benignant, holy, the joy of the faithful. Everything is sweet in Jesus Christ, even to death : and this is why He suffered and died to sanctify death and suffering ; and, in common with God and man, He has been all that was great, and all that was abject, in order to sanctify in Himself all things except sin, and to be the model of every condition.

To consider the nature of death, and of death in Jesus Christ, it is necessary to see what rank it holds in His continual and uninterrupted sacrifice, and, for this, to remark that in sacrifices the most important part is the death of the victim. The oblation and sanctification which precede are the details ; but the accomplishment is the death, in which, by the annihilation of life, the creature renders to God all the homage of which it is capable, in annihilating itself before the

face of His majesty, and in adoring His sovereign existence, which alone exists in reality. It is true that there is another part, after the death of the victim, without which its death would be useless, that is, God's acceptance of the sacrifice. This is what is said in the Scripture : *Et odoratus est Dominus suavitatem*. "And the Lord smelled a sweet sacrifice." This it is that really consummates the oblation ; but it is rather an action of God towards the creature than of the creature towards God, and does not hinder the last act of the creature from being death.

All these things have been accomplished in Jesus Christ. In entering the world, He offered Himself : *Obtulit semetipsum per Spiritum Sanctum. Ingrediens mundum, dixit : Hostiam noluisti . . . Tunc dixi : Ecce venio. In capite, etc.* "Through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself. When He cometh into the world, He saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not. Then said I, Lo, I come." This is His oblation. His sanctification was immediate upon his oblation. This sacrifice lasted all His life, and was accomplished by His death. "Ought He not to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory ?" "Though He were a son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." But "in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears unto Him that was able to save, He was heard in that He feared" : and God raised Him from the dead, and sent Him His glory, prefigured formerly by the fire from heaven that fell upon the victim to burn and consume his body, and to make it live the spiritual life of glory. This is what Jesus Christ has obtained, and what has been accomplished through His resurrection.

Thus this sacrifice being perfected by the death of Christ, and consummated even in His body by His resurrection, in which the image of sinful flesh was absorbed by glory, Jesus Christ had wholly finished His part ; it remained only that

the sacrifice should be accepted of God, that, as the smoke ascended and carried the odour to the throne of God, thus Jesus Christ was, in this state of perfect immolation, offered, carried to, and accepted at the throne of God Himself : and thus it is that has been accomplished in the Ascension, in which He mounted on high and by His own power and by the power of His Holy Spirit, which surrounded Him on every side, was carried away ; as the smoke of the victims, the emblem of Jesus Christ, was carried on high by the air that sustained it, the type of the Holy Spirit : and the Acts of the Apostles indicate to us expressly that He was received up into heaven, in order to assure us that this holy sacrifice accomplished on earth was welcome and acceptable to God, and was received into the bosom of God, to shine in glory through ages upon ages.

This is the state of things as regards our sovereign Lord. Let us consider them now in ourselves. From the moment we enter the Church, which is the world of the Faithful and especially of the elect, into which Jesus Christ entered at the moment of His incarnation by a privilege peculiar to the only Son of God, we are offered and sacrificed. This sacrifice is continued by life and completed at death, in which the soul truly quitting all vices, and the love of the world, with the contagion of which it is always infected throughout life, achieves its immolation and is received into the bosom of God.

Let us not grieve then like the heathen who have no hope. We did not lose our Father at the moment of His death : we lost Him, so to say, when He entered the Church through baptism. From that time, He belonged to God ; His life was devoted to God ; His actions regarded the world only for God. In His death, He became totally separated from sin, and it was at that moment that He was accepted by God, and that His sacrifice received its accomplishment and its consummation. He has performed therefore what He had



vowed : He has finished the work that God had given Him to do ; He has accomplished the only thing for which He was created. The will of God is accomplished in Him, and His will is absorbed in God. Let not our will then separate what God has joined together ; and let us stifle or moderate, by the understanding of truth, the feelings of a corrupt and fallen Nature which has only false images, and which troubles by its illusions the sanctity of the feelings which truth and the Gospel should give us.

Let us then no longer look upon death like the heathen, but like Christians, that is with hope, as St. Paul commands, since this is the especial privilege of Christians. Let us no longer regard a corpse as putrid carrion because deceitful Nature figures it thus ; but as the inviolable and eternal temple of the Holy Spirit, as faith teaches. For we know that sainted bodies are inhabited by the Holy Spirit until the resurrection, which will be caused by virtue of this spirit which dwells in them for this effect. It is for this reason that we honour the relics of the dead, and it was on this true principle that the Eucharist was formerly placed in the mouth of the dead, since, as it was known that they were the temple of the Holy Spirit, it was believed that they also merited to be united to this holy sacrament. But the Church has changed this custom, not in order that these bodies shall not be holy, but for the reason that the Eucharist being the bread of life and of the living, it ought not to be given to the dead.

Let us no longer regard a man as having ceased to live although Nature suggests it ; but as beginning to live, as truth assures. Let us no longer regard His soul as perished and reduced to nothingness, but as quickened and united to the sovereign life ; and let us thus correct, by attention to these truths, the sentiments of error so deeply imprinted in ourselves and those emotions of honour so natural to mankind.

. . . God has created man with two loves, the one for God, the other for himself ; but with this law, that the love

for God shall be infinite, that is without any other limits than God Himself ; and that the love for self shall be finite and relating to God.

Man in this state not only loves himself without sin, but could not do otherwise than love himself without sin.

Since, sin being come, man has lost the first of these loves ; and the love for himself being left alone in this great soul capable of an infinite love, this self-love has extended and overflowed in the empty space which the love of God has quitted ; and thus he loves himself alone, and all things for himself, that is, infinitely. This is the origin of self-love. It was natural to Adam and just in his innocence ; but it became criminal and immoderate after his sin.

Here is the source of this love, and the cause of its defect and of its excess. It is the same with the passion of ruling, of indolence and others. The application is easy. Let us come to our single subject. The dread of death was natural to innocent Adam because, his life being pleasing to God, it must have been pleasing to man : and death was terrible when it ended a life conformed to the will of God. Since, man having sinned, his life has become corrupt, his body and soul enemies to each other, and both to God. This horrible change having infected so holy a life, the love of life has nevertheless remained ; and the dread of death being equally felt, that which was just in Adam is unjust and criminal in us.

Such is the origin of the dread of death and the cause of its faultiness. Let us then illumine the error of Nature by the light of faith. The dread of death is natural, but it is in the state of innocence ; death in truth is terrible, but it is when it puts an end to a pure life. It was just to hate it when it separated a holy soul from a holy body ; but it is just to love it when it separates a holy soul from an impure body. It was just to flee it, when it broke the peace between the body and the soul ; but not when it calms the irreconcilable dissension between them. In short, when it afflicted an innocent body,

when it took away from the body the liberty of honouring God, when it separated from the soul a body submissive to and co-operative with its will, when it put an end to all the good of which man is capable, it was just to abhor it ; but when it puts an end to an impure life, when it takes away from the body the liberty of sinning, when it delivers the soul from a powerful rebel that contradicts all the motives for its salvation, it is very unjust to preserve the same feelings.

Let us not therefore relinquish this love for life which Nature has given us, since we have received it from God ; but let this be for the same life for which God has given it to us and not for a contrary object. In consenting to the love that Adam had for his innocent life and that Jesus Christ himself had for His own, let us bring ourselves to hate a life contrary to that which Jesus Christ has loved, and only to fear the death which Jesus Christ has feared, which comes to a body pleasing to God ; but not to fear a death that, punishing a guilty body, and purging a vicious body, ought to give us quite contrary feelings, if we have anything of faith, of hope and of charity.

It is one of the great principles of Christianity that everything that happened to Jesus Christ should take place in the soul and the body of each Christian : that as Jesus Christ suffered during His mortal life, died to this mortal life, was raised to a new life, ascended to heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father ; so the body and soul should suffer, die, be raised from the dead, ascend to heaven and sit at the right hand of God. All these things are accomplished in the soul during life, but not in the body. The soul suffers and dies to sin in penitence and in baptism ; the soul is raised again to a new life in the same baptism ; the soul quits the earth and ascends to heaven at death, and takes its seat at the right hand of God at the time that He appoints. None of these things happen to the body during this life ; but the

same things befall it afterwards. For at death the body dies to its mortal life ; at the judgment it will rise to a new life ; after the judgment, it will ascend to heaven and will sit at the right hand of God. Thus the same things happen to the body and the soul, but at different times ; and the changes of the body come only when those of the soul are accomplished, that is at the hour of death : so that death is the consummation of the beatitude of the soul and the commencement of the beatitude of the body.

These are the admirable ways of the wisdom of God for the salvation of His saints, and St. Augustine teaches us on this subject that God has arranged them in this wise for fear that if the body of man should die and rise again for ever at baptism, men would only enter into the obedience of the Gospel through the love of life ; whilst the grandeur of faith shines forth far more when it tends to immortality through the shades of death.

. . . It is not therefore right that we should be without grief, like the angels who have no sentiment of Nature ; neither is it right that we should be without consolation, like the heathen who have no sentiment of grace : but it is right that we should be afflicted and consoled like Christians, and that the consolations of grace should overcome the feelings of Nature ; that we should say with the apostles : " We are afflicted but not cast down," in order that grace may not only be in us but victorious in us ; that thus, in sanctifying the name of our Father, His will may be made ours ; that His grace may reign and prevail over Nature, and that our afflictions may be as the substance of a sacrifice which His grace perfects and annihilates for the glory of God ; and that these individual sacrifices may honour and precede the universal sacrifice wherein all Nature should be perfected by the power of Jesus Christ. Thus we derive advantage from our own imperfections, since they serve as material for this sacrifice ; for it is the aim of true Christians to profit by their

own imperfections, because "all things work together for good to the elect."

And if we pay close attention to this, we shall find great advantages for our edification, in considering the thing truly as we said just now. For since it is true that the death of the body is only the type of that of the soul, and since we build upon the principle that in this chance we have all possible reason to hope for its sure salvation, it is certain that if we cannot arrest the progress of grief we should derive this benefit, that since the death of the body is so terrible that it causes in us such emotions, that of the soul ought to cause in us those far more inconsolable. God sends us the first, God turns away the second. Let us then consider the greatness of our blessings in the greatness of our ills, and let the excess of our grief be in proportion to that of our joy.

There is nothing that can moderate it except the fear that he may languish for some time in the pains which are destined to purge the remains of the sin of this life, and we ought carefully to apply ourselves to appease the anger of God towards him. Prayer and sacrifices are a sovereign remedy for his pains. But one of the most solid and useful charities towards the dead is to do the things that they would command were they still in the world, to practise the holy advice which they have given us, and put ourselves, for their sakes, in the condition in which they would wish us at present. By this practice we shall in some sort revive them in ourselves, since their counsels are still living and acting within us ; and as heresiarchs are punished in the other life for the sins into which they have drawn their votaries, in whom their venom is still living, so the dead are recompensed exclusive of their own merit for those to whom they have given succession by their counsels and their example.

Let us strive then with all our power to revive Him in us before God ; and let us console ourselves in the union of our hearts, in which it seems to me that he still lives, and that our

reunion in some sort restores to us His presence, as Jesus Christ makes Himself present in the assembly of His faithful.

. . . Man is assuredly too weak to judge soundly of the result of future things. Let us therefore hope in God, and let us not weary ourselves by rash and indiscreet forecasts. Let us commit ourselves then to God for the direction of our lives, and that grief may not prevail within us.